

**Representing Muslims: Islamophobic discourse and the construction of
identities in Britain since 2001**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Wolverhampton
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2015

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Abstract

Employing critical race theory as a theoretical and analytical framework, this thesis explores the nature, structure and purpose of Islamophobic discourse, and offers two central contributions to the scholarly debate on Islamophobia. First, it contributes to the literature on the nature of Islamophobia by analysing the form and structure of discourse that seeks to represent Muslims and Islam in a number of social and political sites. Second, the thesis addresses a significant gap identified in the scholarly literature, which has largely overlooked the purpose that Islamophobic discourse serves for those employing it.

In order to address the nature and structure of Islamophobic discourse, the thesis analyses representations of Muslims and Islam in dominant national community cohesion and counterterrorism discourses; rearticulation of these discourses at the local level in the West Midlands town of Dudley; the use of Islamophobic discourse by the English Defence League; and the ways in which Islamophobic narratives were used to mark national boundaries in Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands and France.

I explain the convergence of narratives across these levels by extending Ghassan Hage's theoretical formulation of racism as nationalist practices to Islamophobic discourse and argue that, as a cultural racism, Islamophobia can be conceptualised as upholding a system of Eurocentric supremacy, where Western subjects receive a better social, economic and political 'racial contract' and seek to defend these privileges against real and imagined Muslim demands. Whether employed for local, national or civilisational purposes, Islamophobia relies on the notion that space has been culturally compromised by Muslims and must be

restored to authenticity by legitimate non-Muslim cultural managers.

Islamophobia operates through a three-stage ideological process, and restores fantasised power to those who perceive Muslim cultural difference to be unacceptably changing the spaces in which they reside by representing Muslims as making incongruous demands of a territory, singling out a particular timeless value that is under threat, and reifying this value to an absolute. Through this process Muslims are put back in their place, while those employing this discourse experience a restoration of their cultural power to decide the values of a space.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor George Kassimeris, who has supported me with patience through every up and every down, and whose unshakeable vision has guided me through this maze.

I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to Daniel Koczy, who has helped me in immeasurable ways throughout the course of this research. Without you I would not be who or where I am now. Thank you for sharing in the laughter, tears, frustrations and absurdities.

Thank you to Sian Jackson for patiently and good naturedly submitting to learn about Islamophobia, and for innumerable conversations that helped me get my head and heart in order.

Dal Nijjar, thank you for your belief and understanding. I could not have asked for a finer cheerleader.

And Simon Hayward. For every night spent animatedly discussing, learning and living this research. This journey has been all the sweeter for having spent it with you.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Mandy Jackson, who taught me to read, question, struggle, and survive.

Chapter One – Introduction

This thesis contributes to the understanding of Islamophobia in Britain through an analysis of its form and content and a theoretical exploration of its function. The research has two aims, first to understand the nature and character of Islamophobic discourse in Britain since 2001, and second to theorise its purpose; why do individuals and groups employ this discourse at diverging social and political sites? And what benefits does this mode of representation offer its proponents?

In the last decade or so there has been burgeoning scholarly interest in Islamophobia and a number of approaches have sought to conceptualise and explain the phenomenon. The merits and weaknesses of these approaches are discussed in chapter two, however, this increased attention to Islamophobia has served to illustrate the diverse social and political sites at which it is employed by individuals and groups to explain the world as it is and as it should be. It is this ideological operation of Islamophobia that the present thesis is concerned with.

Each chapter of this thesis has a different analytical focus, and the methods used to apprehend and understand Islamophobic discourse are therefore discussed in each respectively. Nevertheless, a broad theoretical understanding of how to approach the phenomena underpins them all. The present chapter sets out the theoretical framework in which the research is situated, considering first the implications of conceptualising Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism, and

second, the theoretical contributions that a critical race theory framework offers to the understanding of Islamophobic discourse. I discuss the assumptions and limitations of these perspectives in order to synthesis and explicate the theoretical framework for the thesis, and conclude with a brief outline of the following chapters.

A conceptual framework for Islamophobia

I conceptualise Islamophobia in this study as a form of cultural racism. This is hardly controversial, and the ways in which scholars have employed this understanding is discussed further in the literature review. At this stage I wish to foreground the theoretical consequences of approaching Islamophobia from this perspective and the research questions that present themselves as a result of this conceptualisation.

The understanding of Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism is based on the new racism thesis developed by scholars in the 1970s and 80s. This perspective holds that new, unlike 'old fashioned' or 'blatant', racism is ostensibly non-racial and turns on the emphasis of cultural signifiers that are believed to condition human behaviour.¹ Although the language of biological or genetic race

¹ New racism has variously been conceptualised as: 'subtle' (Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Reactions Toward the New Minorities of Western Europe," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 77–103; Thomas F. Pettigrew and R.W. Meertens, "Subtle and Blatant Prejudice in Western Europe," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 25 (1995): 57–75.); 'covert' (M. Augoustinos, K. Tiffin, and M. Rapley, "Genocide or a Failure to Gel? Racism, History and Nationalism in Australian Talk," *Discourse & Society* 10 (1999): 351–378; Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon, "Theories of Culture in Racist Discourse," *Race and Society* 3, no. 2 (2000): 93–109; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).); 'symbolic' (John B McConahay and Joseph C Hough, "Symbolic Racism," *Journal of Social Issues* 32, no. 2 (1976): 23–45; Brent Berry and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "'They Should Hire the One with the Best Score': White Sensitivity to Qualification Differences in Affirmative Action Hiring Decisions," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 2 (February 2008): 217.);

recedes, a particular pseudo-biological understanding of culture comes to take its place, which maintains group boundaries by essentialising people as products of the cultures to which they belong.² New racism holds that human behaviour and aptitudes are determined by belonging to particular historical cultures,³ and social tensions emerge when group frontiers are abolished and intermixing of cultural groups occurs, particularly when national boundaries are weakened by mass immigration.

The insights of the new racism thesis thus ground the study of Islamophobia in the process of racialization. For those employing new racist understandings, Muslims are the living bearers of an immutable 'Islamic culture', which conditions their psychology, behaviour and actions in a fundamentally different way to members of other cultures. This essentialisation of culture not only provides an explanatory framework for human difference, but also theorises that tension will be a natural result if cultures are mixed. To regulate social tension, members of differing cultural groups are thus required to renounce their cultural belonging and assimilate into the (culturally different) societies in which they reside in order to forestall the inevitable backlash and social strife that will occur.

A perspective endorsed by new racism theorists is that, although new racism shares with its 'old' counterpart the essentialisation of human groups (through sociological rather than biological signifiers), there is no necessity within new

and 'differentialist' (Ali Rattansi, "'Western' Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities in a 'Postmodern' Frame," in *Racism, Modernity and Identity: On the Western Front*, ed. Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 15–88; Pierre-Andre Taguieff, *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and Its Doubles*, ed. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 4–5.)

² Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (Maryland: University Publications of America, Inc., 1981), 20–23; Etienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?", in *Race and Racialisation: Essential Readings*, ed. Tanya Das Gupta (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc, 2007), 85.

³ Ibid., 84; J. Solomos and Les Back, "Conceptualising Racisms: Social Theory, Politics and Research," *Sociology* 28, no. 1 (1994): 151.

racism for the inferiorisation of culturally different groups. Both Etienne Balibar and Ali Rattansi have argued, for instance, that there need be no explicit reference to hierarchy within new racist boundary formation, and phrases like 'separate but equal' underline this apparent move away from overt assertions of superiority.⁴ It is this distinction that allows the new cultural form to separate itself from the 'old racism', primarily by attempts to de-racialize situations that appear racial and are discriminatory in effect.⁵ From this perspective, Islamophobia is not necessarily dependent on the notion that non-Muslim cultures are better, but turns rather on the proposition that cultural mixing leads to social tension and it is thus in the interests of Muslims to assimilate in order to avoid discrimination or violence.

Conceptualising Islamophobia as a form of new cultural racism thus directs attention to the ways in which Muslims are racialized in the present period as culturally conditioned. The discourse of Islamophobia must be interrogated to draw out the assumptions of essentialised cultural difference and trace the racialization of group members as unalterably other. Understanding Muslims as culturally different, however, does not necessarily imply that Muslim culture is inferior or antithetical. This requires discursive work, and it is this construction that the present study investigates – what is Islamophobic discourse? How does it work to racialize Muslims as culturally determined?

The new racism thesis is not without its detractors, and a number of criticisms require attending to. First, Colin Wayne Leach has argued that it is not 'new' at

⁴ Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?", 86; Rattansi, "'Western' Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities in a 'Postmodern' Frame," 58.

⁵ Frank Reeves, *British Racial Discourse: A Study of British Political Discourse about Race and Race-Related Matters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 11.

all, and covert and indirect expressions of racism were the norm even prior to de jure racial equality.⁶ Second, some scholars have argued that cultural difference has always been implicitly tied up with racial discourse even when biological racism enjoyed widespread scientific support.⁷ Third, as Coenders *et al* have demonstrated, categories of subtle, indirect or covert are difficult to operationalise in empirical research. Perceptions of cultural difference by research subjects, often coded by researchers as indicators of prejudice, may be neutral understandings of social reality.⁸ These points have implications for the study of contemporary Islamophobia. Although the new racism thesis suggests that covert and subtle racialized expression will be more prominent, historical biological racism towards Muslims (particularly based on national or ethnic origins) has not disappeared and any study of Islamophobia must consider how these 'old' racisms are rearticulated within culturally racist discourse. The perception of cultural difference by actors should not be taken *a priori* as evidence of prejudicial attitudes. Although it does imply that differences are to some extent naturalised and essentialised, it is important to interrogate such expressions in their contextual settings in order to draw out the structure, form and purpose of these articulations before labelling them Islamophobic.

⁶ Colin Wayne Leach, "Against the Notion of a 'new Racism,'" *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 15, no. 6 (November 2005): 434.

⁷ The classic example of this is anti-Semitism. Nasar Meer, "Racialisation and Religion: Race, Culture and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 390; S. Schiffer and C. Wagner, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia - New Enemies, Old Patterns," *Race & Class* 52, no. 3 (2011): 77-84.

⁸ Coenders *et al* in their replication of Pettigrew and Meertens' (Pettigrew and Meertens, "Subtle and Blatant Prejudice in Western Europe.") research on new racism, highlighted the problematic nature of the categories utilised, arguing that 'perceived cultural difference' did not necessarily mean prejudice, but may rather reflect (neutral) cognitive perceptions of social reality Marcel Coenders *et al.*, "Blatant and Subtle Prejudice: Dimensions, Determinants, and Consequences; Some Comments on Pettigrew and Meertens," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31, no. May 1999 (2001): 281-297.

Conceptualising Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism implies a number of theoretical assumptions. First, Islamophobia is more likely to be expressed in covert and subtle ways that are rationalized and legitimated by claims of cultural incompatibility. Second, cultural difference within Islamophobic discourse will likely be ascribed an essentialised and naturalised quality, presenting Muslims as culturally conditioned to behave in the ways that they do. Third, cultural difference may, but not necessarily, be presented hierarchically. Within Islamophobic discourse we would expect to see non-Muslim cultures valorised as positive while Muslim culture will be more likely to be pathologised as dysfunctional and represented in disparaging negative terms.

The conceptualisation of Islamophobia as cultural racism suggests that old forms of understanding the world as structured by discrete human groups have found a new articulation, where culture is represented as a determining and relevant human classification. This thesis seeks to understand why the discourse of Islamophobia, expressed at a number of social and political sites, has such traction and appeal at the present historical moment by considering what benefits it provides its adherents. Although the new racism thesis alerts us to the subtle ways race takes on cultural inflections, its ambiguity on hierarchy leaves open the question of why actors choose racist representations of the world. In order to understanding why Islamophobia has such widespread appeal, its purpose must be interrogated. The insights of critical race theory and whiteness studies help to situate the phenomenon by foregrounding racism as a central organising principle of society. The next section considers how these perspectives can aid our understanding of Islamophobia's function as an explanatory discourse and ideology, and the reasons why individuals and groups might employ it.

Theoretical framework: Critical race theory and Islamophobia

The contribution of critical race theory (CRT) to the theoretical position I am developing here lies in its understanding of social relations as centrally constituted by racism and the distributed group privileges and benefits that this gives rise to.

Although its status as a theory has been questioned and its perspectives are far from universally accepted,⁹ CRT nevertheless rests on several central tenets, insights and thematic elements. As Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso have argued, critical race theorists broadly agree on the centrality of racism in social organisation and its intersectionality with other forms of subordination (class, gender, etc.), and seek to challenge dominant ideology and its claims to neutrality through a commitment to social justice, a transdisciplinary perspective and the centring of the experiential knowledge of those subordinated by racism.¹⁰ There are three insights of CRT that are particularly pertinent for the theoretical position of this thesis, which concern the nature of race, the character of racism, and the purpose it serves.

⁹ As Treviño, Harris, & Wallace have argued, CRT cannot really be considered a *theory* as such, because its concepts and methods are not integrated in the coherent, systematically structured way that is required of social theory. Rather than a unified theory, they argue that CRT is an intellectual movement made up of a loose association of scholars who employ a mix of analytical tools, united broadly on the tenets I have discussed above. A. Javier Treviño, Michelle A. Harris, and Derron Wallace, "What's so Critical about Critical Race Theory?," *Contemporary Justice Review* 11, no. 1 (March 2008): 8–9.

¹⁰ Daniel Solórzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory , Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate : The Experiences of African American College Students," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 2000, 63; David Gillborn, *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?* (London: Routledge, 2008), 26–30; Zeus Leonardo, "The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of 'white Privilege,'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 36, no. 2 (2004): 137–152.

The nature of race

Critical race theory rests on the social constructionist position that the concept of race has no objective, material or fixed reality, and should be approached as a complex and shifting social construction that changes over time according to the needs of certain historical and political moments.¹¹ As products of human thought and relations, races are never fixed categories, but are always subject to change when it is politically convenient to do so.¹² This perspective incorporates the observations of the new racism thesis, that dominant society racializes different groups at different times in response to shifting needs.¹³ As Delgado and Stefancic point out, understanding the ebb and flow of racism and racial progress requires a careful consideration of the conditions prevailing at different times and the collective attitudes developed to justify the subjugation and dominance of one group over another.¹⁴ Critical race theorists hold that the essentialisation of racism must be combatted through an understanding and assertion of the intersectionality of overlapping and potentially conflicting identifications and allegiances.¹⁵

CRT offers an understanding of race that attends to its socially constructed nature. Ian Haney Lopez has defined a race as a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent socially significant elements of their

¹¹ Gillborn points to the whitening of the Irish as a good example of this Gillborn, *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?*, 28; Leonardo, "The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of 'white Privilege,'" 42.

¹² Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9–10. Chapter three, which places the central dominant discourses on Muslims in context, discusses in detail how particular representations have worked to flatten the identity of Muslims by emphasising religious attachments and identifications over other important markers of group belonging such as gender, class, nation and ethnicity.

morphology or ancestry.¹⁶ This definition highlights the need to apprehend the historical and social elements of racialization in order to understand what is socially significant at a particular time and why it would be so. Haney Lopez outlines four facets of the social construction of race: first, that humans rather than abstract social forces produce races, second, that as human constructs, races constitute an integral part of the whole social fabric that includes gender and class relations, third, that meaning systems surrounding race change quickly rather than slowly, and fourth that races are constructed relationally against one another rather than in isolation.¹⁷ This understanding of how races are formed in the social mind guides analytical attention to processes of racialization and is essential for understanding how Muslims are created as cultural others in the contemporary period.

CRT's understanding of races as socially constructed implies a broader focus than most understandings of racism allow. Borrowing from whiteness studies, CRT holds that any analysis of racism must take into account not only the representation of minorities, but also the ways in which whiteness is constructed through racist discourse. Henry Giroux has formulated this imperative as the necessity to 'unveil the rhetorical, political, cultural and social mechanisms through which whiteness is both invented and used to mask its power and privilege.'¹⁸ This foregrounds the invisible character of dominant (white) racial identities. As David Gillborn has argued, one of the most powerful and dangerous aspects of whiteness is its deep rooted almost invisible status, which erases its

¹⁶ Ian F. Haney Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 194.

¹⁷ Ibid., 196.

¹⁸ Henry A. Giroux, "White Squall: Resistance and the Pedagogy of Whiteness," *Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (1997): 382.

existence as a racialized and socially constructed identity that requires constant iteration.¹⁹

This observation corresponds with the ambiguity around hierarchy within the new racism thesis, and the position that contemporary expressions of racist ideology do not explicitly or necessarily assert the dominance or superiority of one race over another, rather covert and subtle expressions of power are articulated and often expressed in de-racialized ways.²⁰ It also points to the need to dismantle these often invisible power relations by considering how they ideologically play out, through critical methodology, which teases out the ideological assumptions and the power relations that discursive expressions of 'subtle' racisms imply.

The character of racism

In its focus on the racialized actors within a social system, CRT draws our attention to the character of racism. Zeus Leonardo has clarified the difference between white people, a socially constructed identity, and whiteness, a racial discourse.²¹ This distinction between actors and system is important in that it moves analytical focus away from the utterances and attitudes of individuals to an understanding of dominance. The character of racism is not necessarily overt and hierarchical. Rather, dominance within the racialized social system is enacted

¹⁹ David Gillborn, "Education Policy as an Act of White Supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory and Education Reform" (2005): 9.

²⁰ Reeves, *British Racial Discourse: A Study of British Political Discourse about Race and Race-Related Matters*, 11.

²¹ Zeus Leonardo, "The Souls of White Folk: Critical Pedagogy, Whiteness Studies, and Globalization Discourse," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 5, no. 1 (2002): 31–32.

through the collective routine actions which rearticulate crystallised practices and relations that shape the life chances of various races.²²

The importance of this conceptualisation of the mundane character of racism lies in its foregrounding of the covert and invisible structures and actions that reproduce it. For critical race theorists, analytical attention should focus not on the actions of a few racists, but on the way in which actors belonging to the dominant racial group utilise and articulate social representations that seek to explain and justify the racialized world as it is or ought to be.²³ The concept of white supremacy is of paramount importance here, and is understood by CRT scholars as an all-encompassing system in which white-identified people receive benefits, while those constructed as non-white do not.²⁴

For critical race scholars, white supremacy is not limited to the actions of extremist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the British National Party, who mobilise on the basis of hatred. As Frances Lee Ansley has defined it, white supremacy represents:

... a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white

²² Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Amanda Lewis, and David G. Embrick, "'I Did Not Get That Job Because of a Black Man...': The Story Lines and Testimonies of Color-Blind Racism," *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004): 558–559.

²³ *Ibid.*, 561.

²⁴ Leonardo, "The Souls of White Folk: Critical Pedagogy, Whiteness Studies, and Globalization Discourse," 31–32.

dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.²⁵

What is important here is that white supremacy does not require an overt articulation of racial superiority, rather CRT scholars emphasise the ordinary and everyday character of a system of racial domination. White supremacy is viewed as a patterned and enduring treatment of social groups that is secured through a series of actions whose meaning may be obscured. This understanding focuses analytical attention on the ideological understandings that particular representations secure, and the mundane actions that shape the world in the interests of the dominant racial group.²⁶

In its focus on the racialized system, CRT directs attention not only to ways in which people of colour are constructed as racialized actors, but also how whiteness is reproduced through everyday practices that constitute white people as dominant. It is important here to reiterate the central observation of both CRT and the new racism thesis that races are constructed and therefore whiteness is neither an essence nor a reality, rather it is something that can be accumulated by identifying with white interests.²⁷

The purpose of racism

²⁵ Frances Lee Ansley, quoted in Charles W. Mills, "White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System: A Philosophical Perspective," in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, ed. Ashley Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (London: Routledge, 2003), 37.

²⁶ Gillborn, *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?*, 35.

²⁷ Krista Melanie Riley, "How to Accumulate National Capital: The Case of the 'Good' Muslim," *Global Media Journal - Canadian Edition* 2, no. 2 (2009): 58; Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 52–53.

This conceptualisation of a system of racial dominance brings us closer to an understanding of the purpose of racism. Because of the theoretical understanding of whiteness outlined above, CRT offers a broader perspective on white supremacy than the limited understanding normally denoted by the term. Chiefly, it highlights the investment that white identified people have in the system of white supremacy, which implicates all white people as benefitting from the advantages bequeathed to them by the racialized system. The notion that whites accrue unearned advantages in the current racial structure has been theorised as white privilege,²⁸ but it is important when employing the language of privilege to foreground the processes by which these privileges are secured. As Leonardo has argued, any understanding of privilege is incomplete without an analysis of white supremacy – the system that secures the privileges enjoyed by white people because they have created a structure of domination under which they can thrive.²⁹

The notion that white people universally benefit from a system of racial domination has been the subject of much controversy. Perhaps the most sustained criticisms of CRT's understanding of the way racism functions have been presented by Marxist scholars, particularly Mike Cole, who has argued that there are two problems with the use of the term white supremacy: first that it homogenises white people in positions of power and privilege and second that the term itself has the effect of equating far right racist movements with

²⁸ Leonardo, "The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of 'white Privilege,'" 137; Joe R. Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Pinar Batur, *White Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 5–7; Steve Garner, "The Uses of Whiteness: What European Sociologists Can Do with the Instrument of 'whiteness,'" *Sociology* 40, no. 2 (2006): 257–275.

²⁹ Leonardo, "The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of 'white Privilege,'" 148; 138. As Leonardo notes, the discourse of privilege obscures the subject and agent relationship central to domination by focusing on the advantages that dominant racial actors receive and obscuring the process of appropriation.

institutional racism, preventing a rational analysis of racism.³⁰ In addressing these criticisms it is important to keep in mind the understanding of white supremacy as a scale of domination, in which the mobilisation on the basis of race hatred is at the most extreme and visible end, while everyday practices which uphold white supremacy (discrimination, institutional racism) are at a less extreme end and often invisible. All of these activities, however, contribute to the exclusion and marginalisation of non-whites, and uphold a system which benefits white identified people.

In conceptualising the function of racism as such, David Gillborn has emphasised CRT's concern with the dominance of white interests. Not all white people benefit in the same way, but they do all benefit:

... even with the most extreme forms of poverty and exclusion, Whiteness matters. CRT does not assume that all White people are the same - that would be ludicrous; but CRT does argue that all White people are implicated in White Supremacy.³¹

This position draws upon the understanding that while some white people receive material benefits in their monopolisation of economic, social and state resources, even those on the margins are rewarded a social-psychological wage that grants them social status and deference from non-whites.³²

³⁰ Mike Cole and Alpesh Maisuria, "'Shut the F*** Up', 'You Have No Rights Here': Critical Race Theory and Racialisation in Post-7/7 Racist Britain," *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 2007, <http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=article&articleID=85> [Retrieved 5 August 2012].

³¹ Gillborn, *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?*, 34.

³² France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher, "The Future of Whiteness: A Map of the 'third Wave,'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008): 8–9. This perspective is based heavily on W.E.B. Du Bois's argument that white workers in the reconstructed American South received psychological benefits in the racialised system as a result of their racial identities. As Du Bois puts it: 'It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage.' Quoted in Eric Arnesen,

Understanding the racial privilege and benefits of whites as secured through white supremacy is important for our understanding of why differently situated actors might invest in this ideology. It draws attention not only to the intersection of all racialized identities with other identities, of class, gender, ethnicity, etc., but also to the fact that, as a social construction, whiteness is something that can be accumulated, through identifying and articulating the norms of white society.

CRT and Islamophobia

What does all this mean for the study of Islamophobia? First, the insights of the new racism thesis and CRT on the nature of racism draw attention to the constructed nature of all racialized identities. If race has no objective or fixed meaning, but is rather a category subject to constant change, then sociological signifiers can have as much importance as biological signifiers. From this position Muslims can be conceptualised as culturally racialized through Islamophobic discourses which represent them as behaviourally conditioned by their belonging to a particular culture. The understanding and analysis of Islamophobia thus requires a consideration of the signifiers that come to have meaning when individuals and groups discuss Muslims, and a tracing of the ways in which Muslims are racialized through repetition and emphasis of those signifiers that are believed to mark their essential difference.

Second, the CRT conceptualisation of racism draws attention to its role as a central organising principle of society and its routine, unremarkable and

"Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60, no. Fall (2001): 9.

unrecognised character.³³ This observation foregrounds the invisible and unnoticed aspects of Islamophobia, as the 'business as usual' discourses and social relations that structure society. Analytical attention therefore must be centred on the way in which certain representations come to have a 'common sense' character and the way these narratives are drawn upon and rearticulated in everyday and mundane ways that serve to present Muslims as culturally different to non-Muslims. It also requires close attention to the way these discourses are re-articulated and built upon by speakers and writers in order to maintain and re-affirm shared social narratives that sustain these racialized understandings.

The final contribution of CRT, and most important to this thesis, is its understanding that racism serves an important purpose for actors in contemporary society, sustaining a hierarchy of benefits and serving important psychic and material functions for the dominant group.³⁴ As Delgado points out, understanding the ebb and flow of racism and racial progress requires a careful look at the conditions prevailing at different times and the collective attitudes developed to justify subjugation and the dominance of one group over another.³⁵ This highlights the necessity of considering not only what Islamophobia is, but also the ideological effects of its articulation. The notion of racism as a human construct that distributes privileges draws our attention to the function it serves for those employing it, and contrary to the ambiguity of the 'new racism' scholars, centres the notion of hierarchy. This focus on the hierarchical distribution of material and psychic goods relies on an understanding that

³³ Gillborn, *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?*, 27.

³⁴ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 7.

³⁵ Ibid., 21–22.

racialized social systems require an ideology of dominance which functions to distribute these privileges. Analysing Islamophobic articulation thus necessitates attention to both the social system that it sustains and the purpose it serves.

Building on the insights discussed so far, the theoretical framework that this thesis employs considers Muslims as subjected to both overt and covert racialized discourse, that have a historical genealogy in previously racialized forms which may continue to be applied to Muslim groups (understood as nationally, ethnically or racially different). Given the increasingly socially illegitimate nature of such expressions, however, these are contemporarily articulated in a more covert form. For this reason, Islamophobic discourse is likely to incorporate a narrative that seeks to distinguish itself from these older forms of racism by presenting itself as a legitimate reaction to cultural difference.

The social construction of races, the character of racism and the purpose it serves all lead to an emphasis on the importance of discourse as the vehicle through which racist ideology and practices are transmitted. In order to understand and challenge cultural racism, we must approach it at the level of discourse, while keeping in mind the fact that racialized discourses have real social effects and are the means by which societal privileges, status and resources are allocated.

Discourse and ideology

Discourse is a notoriously slippery concept with a number of theoretical inflections that condition its analytical use. Teun A van Dijk has argued that new racism is primarily discursive; enacted through text and talk and having a central

role in the reproduction (and challenge) of dominance.³⁶ As a racist discourse, I understand Islamophobia as the means by which ideological understandings of Muslims and their position in society are transmitted, shared, and resisted by individuals acting as group members. It is the nature of these ideological understandings that the present study seeks to determine, through an analysis of the content and structure of Islamophobic utterances.

The racialized understandings of Muslims that are central to Islamophobic discourse can be understood, following Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's CRT conceptualisation of ideology, as the broad mental frameworks that social groups use to make sense of the world.³⁷ Since these frameworks are a sum of the ideas, prejudices and myths that are used by individuals to understand and justify the way the world is, they can be interrogated for representations of the races.³⁸ The approaches to analysing these frameworks vary slightly in each chapter of this thesis, however the methodology is guided by the understanding that, as a culturally racist discourse, Islamophobia involves the marking of boundaries of identity, where Muslims are represented as different and discursive work serves to construct them as antithetical to local, national and civilisational identities.³⁹

From this perspective, understanding the ideology of Islamophobia requires careful attention to the content of text and talk identified as (potentially)

³⁶ T. A. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249.

³⁷ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁹ Since each chapter of this thesis has a different focus and seeks to answer differing research questions, there is no single methodology used across the thesis. I discuss methods in each chapter, however the theoretical framework outlined here guides the research and analysis throughout the thesis, in terms of the conceptualisation of Islamophobia and approaches to its analysis that follow from this understanding of the way racist discourses operate in society.

Islamophobic. Predicate analysis is employed throughout this thesis, and seeks to isolate representations of Muslims and Islam by focusing on collocates of these nouns. Predicates establish what sort of thing a subject is, and direct analytical attention to particular representations and the ways they come to have social significance.⁴⁰ The nature of Islamophobia is revealed through an analysis of the discourse's content and the common topics and frames that recur, the style and rhetorical structure of the discourse, and the regularly occurring narratives that seek to explain the different positions of Muslims and non-Muslims in contemporary society.⁴¹

The critical method explicitly links discourse with broader social forces, and is employed throughout this thesis. Foregrounding the inherent instability of all ideological discourse, critical methodology aims first to uncover the internal contradictions and myths drawn upon to sustain particular ideological understandings, and second to make explicit the ideological effects of employing particular representations. Critical methodology makes clear the relationship between discursive choices and their social consequences, and maintains a broader critical project which aims to equip individuals and groups for resistance to these discourses.

Discourses of interest in this thesis are identified through the use of construction moments: events or occurrences that bring forth particular representations and crystallise them in the social realm. Construction moments help us delineate the way that particular understandings are sedimented, by

⁴⁰ Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 232–234; Jennifer K. Lobasz, "The Woman in Peril and the Ruined Woman: Representations of Female Soldiers in the Iraq War," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 29, no. 3 (2008): 313–314.

⁴¹ Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, 66–70.

tracing how representations emerge and discursively construct new realities, and the ways in which these representations mould understandings of events through the recycling and re-articulation of older discourses. By providing a pinpoint moment at which particular representations come to have salience, the social understanding of these events through particular ideological prisms can be determined and understood.⁴²

Research aims

This thesis has three central research aims, based on the theoretical insights of new racism and critical race theory. First, I want to understand what Islamophobic discourse is. This concerns the nature of Islamophobia, the representations that are central to it and the way in which Muslims are socially constructed as having cultural aptitudes that guide their behaviour. By focusing analytical attention on the discursive work undertaken to construct Muslim identity as discrete, culturally determined and essentially different, a greater understanding may be attained of what constitutes Islamophobia.

Second, I want to understand how Islamophobia constructs boundaries. This is related to the observation above that, understood as a racist discourse, analytical attention must focus on the way in which particular representations of Muslims serve to construct and maintain group boundaries of inside and outside.

⁴² Henri C Nickels et al., "Working Paper 13: A Comparative Study of the Representations of 'Suspect' Communities in Multi-Ethnic Britain and of Their Impact on Irish Communities and Muslim Communities - Mapping Newspaper Content," *Institute for the Study of European Transformations* August (2009): 5–6, [http://intrweb.org/fms/MRSite/Research/iset/_fms_recycle_WP13 H Nickels 21.pdf](http://intrweb.org/fms/MRSite/Research/iset/_fms_recycle_WP13%20H%20Nickels%2021.pdf) [Retrieved 7 January 2011].; Yasmin Hussain and Paul Bagguley, "Securitized Citizens: Islamophobia, Racism and the 7/7 London Bombings," *The Sociological Review* 60, no. 4 (2012): 731.

Finally, I want to understand the purpose of Islamophobia. Understood as a racial ideology and through the conceptual and theoretical frameworks I have discussed, Islamophobia must perform some function for its adherents. In order to understand why Islamophobia has such salience at the present historical moment, the benefits that this racialized understanding of the world offers to those employing it must be considered. As the literature review demonstrates, this is a question that has been largely ignored by scholars seeking to understand Islamophobia, either because Islamophobia is conceptualised as merely a continuation of older colonial, imperial and/or orientalist discourse, whose purpose is domination, or because Islamophobia is theorised as racism, which is considered to have clear hierarchical purposes for its proponents. Although both of these propositions offer partial explanation of why Islamophobia is drawn upon by social actors, they fail to fully comprehend the reality of contemporary Islamophobia.

On the first point, although historical antecedents mark its contemporary configuration, conceptualising Islamophobia as merely a continuation of these discourses does not fully explain the current form of the discourse. Why would ordinary British people invest in propagating colonial and imperial interests at a time when these things are a distant memory? Similarly, if Islamophobia is merely neo-orientalism then why are Muslims represented almost exclusively in negative terms? Where is the exoticism and fascination that marks orientalist thought? On the second point, how can the understanding of racism as propagating hierarchy be reconciled with the ambiguity on hierarchy put forth by new racism theorists? The literature review addresses these questions in more

detail, but this brief discussion serves to indicate that current theories of the purpose of Islamophobia are lacking in explanatory power.

In order to understand the widespread appeal of contemporary Islamophobia I am primarily concerned with the British context. However, even a cursory glance at British Islamophobia reveals that it is deeply entwined with more widely shared social narratives that situate Britain within 'the West' as a bearer of Enlightenment rationality and sharing in a history of civilisational glory. These narratives are essential to British Islamophobia's story of itself and of the dangers and threats Muslims are believed to pose. For this reason the analysis, although primarily focused on Britain, does not ignore the importance of broader discourses with European and global resonance.

To sum up, the conceptual framework adopted in this thesis conceives of Islamophobia as a culturally racist discourse and employs the insights of critical race theory in order to guide methodology and interpretation. I understand discourse as social representation, enacted and interpreted through text, talk, and visual symbols. For this reason predicate analysis and construction moments are analytical tools central to this thesis, but I am also interested in the ideological effects of such representations and the ways in which particular representations advantage some groups over others. Critical methodology is employed to determine this, by applying first and second order critiques to the particular narratives and the identity constructions and boundaries they create. Finally, I am centrally concerned with why Islamophobic discourse appears across diverse social and political sites, and employ the theoretical insights of CRT in order to understand how identities are created relationally through racialized discourse and the ways in which invisible racial identities may be brought to

visibility through critical approaches to racialized discourse. The study aims to answer three central research questions that attend to the nature, character and function of islamophobia: What is Islamophobic discourse? How does it work to mark boundaries of identity? What is its purpose for those employing it?

Chapter Two (Literature Review) situates the current study in a wider scholarly context and makes the case for the necessity of this research by considering how Islamophobia has been approached in previous works. Considering historical and comparative approaches to Islamophobia I argue that each of these provides partial explanation of the nature of the phenomena by attending to where it comes from, what it is and how it works. I outline the space into which my research fits by foregrounding the importance of the function and purpose of Islamophobia.

In order to understand Islamophobic discourse, careful attention must be given to the contextual settings in which it is articulated. Chapter three sets the context for the thesis by considering discourses of national prominence that have constructed Muslim identity in Britain since 2001. In this chapter, I trace the way that key construction moments (the Northern Uprisings of summer 2001 and the September 11, 2001 and July 7, 2005 terrorist attacks) opened up space for new conceptualisations of Muslim identity and argue that the discourses which emerged provided the central frames through which British Muslims were understood and represented. Considering the community cohesion and counterterrorism discourses, this chapter traces the social construction of a racialized Muslim identity, by foregrounding the central discursive frame of good/bad Muslims and the way in which dominant discourses de-emphasised

salient aspects of Muslim identity in such a way that culture became the primary prism through which Muslims in Britain were understood in the post-2001 period.

Chapters Four and Five are concerned with the frames and themes of Islamophobic representation and employ predicate analysis, which attends to collocates of the nouns 'Islam' and 'Muslim', in order to draw out the representations employed. Having identified the ways Muslims are represented and the central narratives that make up Islamophobic discourse, these are subjected to the critical method in order to highlight the internal inconsistencies in the discourses as well as the ideological effects of such representations. These case studies highlight the ways in which Islamophobic understandings created group boundaries.

Chapter Four analyses Islamophobia at the local level in order to trace how particular representations of Muslims were employed to argue against construction of a mosque in the West Midlands town of Dudley. By considering the argumentative strategies used by correspondents to local newspaper *Dudley News* this chapter analyses the predicates of the nouns 'Islam' and 'Muslim' in letters to the Editor in order to identify how Muslims were constructed, and foregrounds the way dominant national representations were recycled and rearticulated in a local context to prevent Muslim action and change to the locality.

Chapter five considers the way group boundaries were created and maintained through Islamophobia by considering the discourse of overtly 'anti-Islamist' group, the English Defence League. Concentrating on the group's central assertion that it is not racist, this chapter demonstrates how Islamophobia

functions stylistically, through an analysis of the way Muslims and Islam were represented in articles on the EDL's website *EDL News*. This chapter is concerned with both the narratives and the discursive strategies of Islamophobia, and considers the way (culturally) racist discourse is constructed, focusing on the role of denials, diminutives, and positive self and negative other representations have in legitimizing and rationalizing Islamophobic discourse.

Chapter six considers how Islamophobia was used to draw national boundaries in four European states. By considering construction moments in Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands and France, I argue that Islamophobic representations created and maintained national boundaries by presenting Muslims as antithetical to a particular cherished national value. A content analysis of the types of discourses brought to fore during these controversies highlights the similarities in the ways actors in a number of European states utilised Islamophobic narratives in order to construct national boundaries which implicitly excluded Muslims as national subjects. This chapter also considers how Islamophobic discourse is reliant on appeals to a larger discourse of civilisation.

Chapter seven draws together all of these analyses to interpret and explain the reasons why such constructions might have salience and relevance in such varied social spaces and for differently situated people. If Islamophobia is socially constructed, what is it socially constructed *for*? By demonstrating how Islamophobia relies on the idea of spatial management I draw upon the work of Ghassan Hage in order to theorise Islamophobia as a form of spatial dominance that attempts to construct stable identities as a way to resolve identity crises brought on by the perception that Muslims are trying to change Europe. By considering both inclusive Islamophobia and exclusionary discourses, this chapter

demonstrates how they rely on the same identity constructions. I argue in this chapter that the varied articulations and assertions of Islamophobia are best understood as Eurocentric discourse in which a shared social narrative of the west attempts to control the Muslims in its midst by constructing them as antithetical and requiring management before Islamic will gets out of control.

Critical race theory focuses our attention on race as a central organising principle of society, and therefore all social and geographical spaces as racialized. CRT also highlights invisible white racialized identities and the importance for individuals of continually rearticulating and reconstructing these identities. Understanding Islamophobia as a racialized discourse requires us to consider its purpose and function to those employing it. I argue in this thesis that Islamophobia relies on the notion that space has been culturally compromised by Muslims and must be restored to authenticity by legitimate non-Muslim cultural managers. Islamophobia operates through a three-stage ideological process, and restores fantasised power to those who perceive Muslim cultural difference to be unacceptably changing the spaces in which they reside by representing Muslims as making incongruous demands of a territory, singling out a particular timeless value that is under threat, and reifying this value to an absolute. Through this process not only are Muslims are put back in their place, but those employing Islamophobia experience a restoration of their cultural power to decide the values of a space.

Chapter Two - Islamophobia: A literature Review

Introduction

The term 'Islamophobia' has become a central concept in academic analyses of the political and social struggles that mark the contemporary world. Yet, as a contested concept, its definition, social meaning and operational analytic use is fraught with conflict. Everyday conversational use of the term ranges from uncritical acceptance to virulent denial, making the lack of an agreed upon definition a central controversy. But the issue is not merely semantic. The debate over whether there is such a thing as Islamophobia and what it might comprise is a political struggle, over the recognition, articulation and protection of identities, and the incorporation, and limits, of difference.

Although the definitional debate is wide ranging and significant, it is by no means the only disagreement that the term generates. A review of the vast and growing literature which takes Islamophobia as its object of research reveals a breadth of approaches to the phenomenon and its analysis. Any compartmentalisation of such research is necessarily artificial. Islamophobia has become an object of investigation relatively recently, chiefly because of the perceived increase in Islamophobic sentiment and incidents after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.⁴³ It is a fledgling subject, and scholars have borrowed

⁴³ This is not to say that Islamophobia 'began' on 11 September, 2001, merely that the apparent increase in Islamophobia following the attacks led to a greater receptivity among the public and within academia that such a phenomenon existed and needed to be explained.

from other disciplines in order to isolate and explain the phenomenon. Definitions and explanations of Islamophobia therefore incorporate a number of approaches, each of which aid our understanding by focusing on a particular aspect of the phenomenon, but often at the cost of de-emphasising other, important, characteristics.

It is useful to analytically divide the literature into two groups, historical approaches and comparative analyses. Each of these approaches generates its own particular understanding of the term, prioritises particular aspects of the phenomenon, and directs analytical attention to specific manifestations and expressions of Islamophobia.

The first approach identifies contemporary Islamophobia as rooted in imperial and colonial discourses, particularly Orientalism. Scholars adopting this understanding have foregrounded the historical antecedents of Islamophobia, and argued that its manifestation today involves the contemporary recycling and re-articulation of older tropes for similar exclusionary purposes and with analogous effects. The second approach considers that Islamophobia can be most usefully understood through comparison with similar exclusionary discourses. Proponents of this position have made use of the vast theoretical literature on racism and anti-Semitism as useful analogies to aid our understanding of the contemporary situation of Muslims. A crude summation of the different analytical commitments of these approaches highlights that the historical approach foregrounds *where* Islamophobia comes from, while the comparative approach attempts to explain *what* it is and *how* it works. Each of these approaches tells us something about Islamophobia, but, naturally, each has its own weaknesses and shortcomings.

The following chapter considers these approaches in turn, appraising the contribution of each to our understanding of the contemporary situation of British Muslims. Although my focus is on Britain, it is impossible to ignore the fact that British Islamophobia operationalises a global discourse and a shared European/Western history in its articulation of themes and tropes. For reasons that become starkly apparent once any analysis of Islamophobia is undertaken, it is imprudent to discount the vast literature that has studied Islamophobia outside of the British context. Having said that, I do not include studies whose focus is outside 'the West'. This is because British Islamophobia, conceptualised within a critical race theory paradigm, depends upon an unequal power relationship between a majority (non-Muslim) and a minority Muslim population, the latter of which has fewer economic, social and discursive resources, due to a history of colonial and imperial domination and post-war immigration patterns. This situation is shared by many other Western nations, which demonstrate remarkably similar sedimented narratives and understandings of Muslim populations. Non-Western nations, however, have different histories and patterns of Islamophobia, and are thus not so directly comparable to the British situation.

'The West' is used throughout this review to refer to those capitalist nations of Europe and North America which consider themselves to have a shared history and (largely Christian) tradition. There is a large amount of controversy associated with use of this term. As Fred Halliday has noted, 'the West' is not a valid aggregate of the vastly different societies it seeks to describe.⁴⁴ I agree with Halliday's criticism, however, as the empirical chapters in this thesis demonstrate, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that 'the West' does have

⁴⁴ Fred Halliday, "'Islamophobia' Reconsidered," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 5 (1999): 893.

some validity for speakers who invoke it for political purposes. For them, it describes a shared history and a mutual future, based on the notion that those societies believed to belong to the West draw upon the same traditions in order to face similar contemporary challenges. Regardless of its empirical reality, the *idea* of the West operates as an imagined community for those who invoke it, and this is the sense in which the term is used throughout this thesis.⁴⁵

Before turning to the approaches described, it is necessary to take a brief detour around the definitional debate that has so marred the short life of Islamophobia studies. Centred on the popularisation of the term by the Runnymede Trust's report on Islamophobia,⁴⁶ this dispute serves to focus attention on important aspects of the phenomenon that are critically considered by scholars approaching Islamophobia from the perspectives I have outlined above.

Defining Islamophobia: A challenge for us all

The Runnymede Trust's 1997 report, *Islamophobia: A challenge for us all*, has come to form the starting point for all other attempts to conceptualise and understand Islamophobia. Authored by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, it was the first source to systematically define the concept and has become the point of departure from which contemporary understandings of the phenomenon have flowed.

⁴⁵ Farhat Shahzad, "Forging the Nation as an Imagined Community," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (2012): 21–38; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁴⁶ Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All," 1997, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/17/32.html> [Retrieved 20 June 2011].

Defined as a shorthand way of referring to the dread or hatred of Islam and therefore the fear or dislike of Muslims,⁴⁷ Islamophobia was conceptualised as unfounded hostility towards Islam, and the practical consequences of this for Muslims in terms of discrimination and social exclusion.⁴⁸ Foreseeing potential objection to such a definition, the Commission attempted to disambiguate it by clarifying the point at which legitimate criticism ended and unfounded hostility began. To this end a list of eight views about Islam and Muslims was submitted, with 'closed' and 'open' positions attached to them, comprising whether Islam is: monolithic or diverse, separate or interacting, inferior or different; whether Muslims are considered enemies or partners, manipulative or sincere; whether Muslim criticisms of the West are rejected or considered; whether discrimination against Muslims is defended or criticised; and whether Islamophobia is seen as natural or problematic.⁴⁹ Legitimate criticism, the Commission claimed, was the province of open views, while Islamophobia was 'the recurring characteristic of closed views'.⁵⁰

As the first attempt to comprehensively define Islamophobia,⁵¹ the report was ground breaking in its assertion that Muslims were experiencing a specific

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁵¹ There is some dispute about when the term 'Islamophobia' was first used in English. AbdoolKarim Vakil has noted that Edward Said used the term in his article 'Orientalism reconsidered', published in three different print contexts in 1985, and thus reaching both an academic and a wider activist readership. AbdoolKarim Vakil, "Is the Islam in Islamophobia the Same as the Islam in Anti-Islam; Or, When Is It Islamophobia Time?," in *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia, Symposium Papers*, ed. Bobby S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (Leeds: University of Leeds, March, 2008), 43. Most other scholars date the term to the early 1990s. Chris Allen places the first usage around December 1991, when it appeared in both the American journal *Insight*, and Tariq Modood's book review in *The Independent*. Chris Allen, "Islamophobia and Its Consequences," in *European Islam: Challenges for Society and Public Policy*, ed. Samir Amghar, Amel Boubekeur, and Michael Emerson (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), 148–149. Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins date the first usage in the UK media in 1994, which indicates that the term was gaining popular traction. Nick Hopkins and Vered Kahani-Hopkins,

targeting on the basis of their faith or their identification as Muslim. It has also been hugely influential on the conceptualisation of Islamophobia for policy makers, and a number of organisations have incorporated similar definitions of the phenomenon that focus on the fear of Islam and Muslims.⁵² The Runnymede conceptualisation, however, has been subject to two central criticisms: first, of its procedural definition, and second, of its essentialisation of identities. These pave the way to more general problems with the term and its understanding.

The first criticism foregrounds the procedural manner in which Islamophobia was defined. This argument holds that because the report was intended as guidelines for equalities and anti-racist practitioners, it overemphasised a checklist style approach, which gave rise to a reductionist and dualistic conceptualisation of the phenomenon. This is embodied in the central focus on Islamophobia as the recurrence of 'closed views'.⁵³ As David Tyrer has noted, this approach may be useful to discern routine cases of Islamophobia, but it is severely limited when considering more complex articulations.⁵⁴ 'Closed views'

"Minority Group Members' Theories of Intergroup Contact: A Case Study of British Muslims' Conceptualizations of 'Islamophobia' and Social Change.," *The British Journal of Social Psychology* 45, no. Pt 2 (June 2006): 249. As Mike Cole has noted this coincided with the first Gulf War and increasing perceptions of Muslims as targeted on the basis of their religious identity in both global and local contexts. Mike Cole, "A Plethora of 'Suitable Enemies': British Racism at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 9 (November 2009): 1681. The Runnymede Report notes in its forward that the Commission did not coin the term, and it was already in use by some sections of the Muslim community. Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All," iii.

⁵² The Council of Europe, for example, operationalises a similar definition: 'Islamophobia can be defined as the fear of or prejudiced viewpoint towards Islam Muslims and matters pertaining to them.' Ingrid Ramberg, "Islamophobia and Its Consequences on Young People: European Youth Centre Budapest," in *European Youth Centre Budapest*, vol. 1–6 June (Council of Europe, 2004), 6.

⁵³ A focus that Chris Allen notes took on a life of its own, becoming so central to the definition of Islamophobia that the immediately preceding definition given was changed a page later, from fear or hostility towards Muslims and Islam, to the recurring characteristic of closed views and nothing more. Chris Allen, "K.I.S.S. Islamophobia (Keeping It Simple and Stupid)," in *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia, Symposium Papers*, ed. Bobby S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (Leeds: University of Leeds, March, 2008), 31.

⁵⁴ David Tyrer, "Institutionalised Islamophobia in British Universities," *Social Research* (PhD Thesis (Sociology), University of Salford, 2003), 56.

imply that Islamophobia can be reduced to ignorance and refusing to open one's mind, leaving more subtle (and potentially more dangerous) forms of Islamophobic discourse unscrutinised while focusing on blatant and easily discernible forms.⁵⁵

This reductionist dualistic approach to Islamophobia was exacerbated by the report's suggestion that closed views could be challenged by the proliferation of open views, a position that might be termed Islamophilia.⁵⁶ If Islamophobia is an abnormal and pathological dislike of Muslims and Islam, then Islamophilia is the equally abnormal love of Muslims and Islam, and is no less reductionist or essentialist with regard to Muslim identities. Chris Allen has argued that this dualism ignores not only all the grey areas between excessive fear and hostility and excessive love, but also the reality of Muslims as real people in real environments.⁵⁷ The operationalization of a checklist of open and closed views, with the latter conceived as erroneous misunderstandings, encouraged an instrumental understanding of Islamophobia as a phenomenon which could be tackled through a programme of perception correction.

Defending the neologism 'Islamophobia', the report stated that the coining of a new word and the identification of a growing danger could 'play a valuable part in the long endeavour of correcting perceptions and improving relationships'.⁵⁸ The very terms used in this passage point to a profound problem with the way the Runnymede Trust conceived Muslim identities and the status of Islamophobia. To correct a perception implies an essence that can be uncovered

⁵⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁶ Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 168.

⁵⁷ Allen, "K.I.S.S. Islamophobia (Keeping It Simple and Stupid)," 31.

⁵⁸ Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All," 4.

and an idea of what the correct perception should be. The intergroup contact and dialogue proposed by the Commission represented a means of bringing all actors in line with this 'correct' perception, and in pursuing this logic it eschewed the power dynamics embedded in Islamophobic articulations.⁵⁹ As Allen has convincingly argued, the strategy that flows from the Runnymede conception was flawed from the outset; challenging binaries by merely imposing positive over negative images is no challenge at all. The binaries remain in place and meaning continues to be shaped by them.⁶⁰ Such a conceptualisation and strategy fails to recognise the ideological aspects of Islamophobia.

The second criticism directed at Runnymede's conceptualisation follows from the first. If there exists a correct Islam that may be grasped by endorsing open views and correcting erroneous perceptions, then there must equally be an incorrect Islam that individuals mistakenly promote and draw upon. What makes this notion so deeply problematic is its assumption of some form of collective responsibility among Muslims for the circulation of this 'incorrect Islam'. Reliance on the notion of a right way to be Muslim restricts identities and, again, reinforces existing power relations. Fred Halliday has argued that social engineering of this type tends to lead to the acceptance of particular, and often

⁵⁹ An interesting alternative to Runnymede Trust's understanding of Islamophobia was provided by the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain (MPGB). Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins have analysed the intergroup dynamics involved in the Runnymede definition as compared to that of the MPGB, and concluded that both saw Muslims as unacceptably targeted through Islamophobic articulations, exclusionary practices and acts, yet the latter's definition focused on collective action designed to restore power rather than correct perceptions. This focus on the unequal power dynamic that marks the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims highlights the procedural approach of the Runnymede report. In contrast, the MPGB considered that power and dignity for Muslims was a precondition for dialogue, without which any intergroup contact would be steeped in inequality that could only subvert Muslims' identity as Muslims. Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, "Minority Group Members' Theories of Intergroup Contact: A Case Study of British Muslims' Conceptualizations of 'Islamophobia' and Social Change.," 255; 259.

⁶⁰ Allen, *Islamophobia*, 130.

conservative, versions of Muslim tradition as the one true Islam.⁶¹ Such essentialising, especially when backed up by the power of the state to legitimise particular versions of Islam, leads to the silencing and delegitimising of individuals outside of these traditions. This dualism rears itself again in the form of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims; those who conform to the correct Islam and those who do not.

The promotion of such essentialism implies that those 'bad' Muslims who step outside the boundaries laid down for them by the dualistic conceptualisations of their identities bear some responsibility for the Islamophobia directed towards them. The logic of the Runnymede conceptualisation implies collective Muslim responsibility for Islamophobic sentiment because of its essentialist and dualistic thrust. The homogenisation of Muslim as a category, what Tyrer has described as their radical differentiation as 'other' from the 'rest', and their de-differentiation in dualistic terms as 'good'/'bad', 'moderate'/'extremist' and subsequently subject to 'open'/'closed' views, reifies the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate criticism.⁶² The implication is that Islamophobia is illegitimate when directed at 'good', 'moderate' Muslims, while 'bad', 'extremist' Muslims bear some responsibility for Islamophobic sentiment and may therefore be legitimately targeted with 'closed' views.⁶³ As Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer

⁶¹ Halliday, "'Islamophobia' Reconsidered," 897.

⁶² David Tyrer, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Seeing: Moderated Muslims, (in)visibilities and Islamophobia," in *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia, Symposium Papers*, ed. Bobby S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (Leeds: University of Leeds, March 2008, 2008), 51.

⁶³ In his Oxford University Press blog, Walter Lacquer made exactly this point, stating that the reason people subscribe to 'closed views' (that Islam is separate and 'other', aggressive, a political ideology etc.) is because this is precisely what Iranian leaders preach. Walter Lacquer, "The Origins of Facism: Islamic Facism, Islamophobia, Antisemitism," *Oxford University Press Blog*, 2006, http://blog.oup.com/2006/10/the_origins_of_2/ [Retrieved 20 April 2011]. For Lacquer, the behaviour of some Muslims legitimised 'closed' views, and this view is widely shared. Ed Husain, writing in the *London Evening Standard*, stated 'If there is anti-Muslim sentiment, we Muslims have to ask what some of us have done to provoke such feelings in a country that is proudly multi-cultural. Islamist extremism might be a good starting point.' Ed Husain, "Stop

have pointed out, this would be inconceivable for any other racialized group.⁶⁴ Allen makes the same point, stating that in the post-Macpherson political and social culture there is no credibility in suggesting that the murder of Stephen Lawrence was in any way legitimised because some black males exacerbated racist stereotypes.⁶⁵ Yet it is precisely this type of thinking that the Runnymede Report encourages. Until 'bad' Muslims stop saying and doing what 'bad' Muslims say and do, Islamophobia is (at least when addressed to these Muslims) in some sense legitimate, and 'closed' views justified.

The problems with the Runnymede conceptualisation of Islamophobia are profound. Its reductionist approach means that Islamophobic expression is dualistically sorted into categories of legitimate and illegitimate, and Muslims are subsequently reduced to 'good' and 'bad', undeserving or deserving of Islamophobic sentiment. What is most troubling about the Runnymede conceptualisation, however, is its failure to recognise the power dynamics inherent in Islamophobia. Its reductionist definition of Islamophobia as the recurrence of closed views diminishes it to a procedural checklist of incorrect perceptions that may be corrected, its proponents cured. This understanding not only upholds essentialist understandings of Muslim identities but fails to significantly challenge most Islamophobic discourse and practice, which is predicated not on closed minded 'views', as the report contends, but ideological

Pandering to the Islamist Extremists," *London Evening Standard*, 7 July, 2008, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/stop-pandering-to-the-islamist-extremists-6912982.html> [Retrieved 12 November 2014].

⁶⁴ Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer, "Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies 2010" (2010): 138, http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/emrc/publications/IAMHC_revised_11Feb11.pdf [Retrieved 25 June 2011]. The authors highlight that in post-Macpherson Inquiry Britain it would be both absurd and shocking to argue that black communities should respond to racist violence by getting their own house in order.

⁶⁵ As Allen states, 'Islamophobia cannot be determined, differentiated and defined by the type of Muslim being victimised'. Allen, *Islamophobia*, 79–80.

currents and shared social narratives that have a great deal of explanatory power for its proponents.

The problematic nature of the Runnymede definition focuses attention on the necessity of employing more sophisticated understandings of the concept. In order to avoid the essentialising of identities and gain an understanding of Islamophobia that encompasses both its overt and covert expressions, scholars have focused on the phenomenon as an ideological concept that bears comparison to other discourses of exclusion, including historical understandings of Muslims, racism and anti-Semitism. These comparisons illuminate the way Islamophobia operates structurally and provide a more nuanced understanding of its function in contemporary society.

Imperialism, colonialism and Orientalism

Tracing the historical antecedents of Islamophobia, scholars have drawn attention to the way in which imperial, colonial and Orientalist discourses are rearticulated for the social and political needs of the present period. Such a consideration foregrounds the constitutive role that Islam and Muslims have played as the other against which European and Western identity has defined itself.

As several scholars have noted, imperialistic understandings of Islam have shaped and formed the identity of Europeans since the 15th century. Walter D. Mignolo, for example, has argued that the expulsion of the Moors and Jews from Spain at the same historical moment as the discovery of the Americas involved a confrontation with (and eventually a conquest of) both the religious internal

others of Europe and the racial external 'others' of the New World.⁶⁶ In this new geo-political environment, Christian European identity increasingly defined itself in contrast to rival civilisations, the most imposing of which were the Islamic empires of the East.⁶⁷ Imperialistic understandings constructed Muslims as one unified imperial other, linked by adherence to a rival religion, which could not be colonised like American Indians but had to be confronted in the case of the Turks, or expelled in the case of the Moors.⁶⁸ This position informs Ziauddin Sardar's claim that Islamophobia 'records the historic memory of Islam as a competitor and inimical civilization'.⁶⁹

As Europeans conquered Muslim territory, these imperial conceptualisations of Muslims as religious and geopolitical rivals gave way to colonial management strategies, which viewed Islam as a dying civilisation. The colonising European powers sought not to eradicate Islam, but to impose western forms of control in order to replace theological power with the European secularised nationalism.⁷⁰ Predicated on the understanding that Islam represented the foundation of life for these populations, colonial strategies of governance aimed to discipline populations by harnessing religious authority to repress rebellion and keep order.⁷¹ The proliferation of colonialist understandings of the centrality of Islamic religious authority has led some scholars to argue that contemporary

⁶⁶ Walter D Mignolo, "Islamophobia/Hispanophobia: The (re) Configuration of the Racial Imperial/colonial Matrix," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5, no. 1 (2006): 17.

⁶⁷ Ramón Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 1, no. fall (2006): 3–4.

⁶⁸ Mignolo, "Islamophobia/Hispanophobia: The (re) Configuration of the Racial Imperial/colonial Matrix," 21.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Richard Phillips, "Remembering Islamic Empires: Speaking of Imperialism and Islamophobia," *New Formations* 70, no. 1 (2011): 98.

⁷⁰ Allen, *Islamophobia*, 32.

⁷¹ Vincent Geisser, "Intellectual and Ideological Debates on Islamophobia: A 'French Specificity' in Europe?," *Human Architecture* VIII, no. 2 (2010): 41; Ramón Grosfoguel, "Epistemic Islamophobia and Colonial Social Sciences," *Human Architecture* VIII, no. 2 (2010): 36.

Islamophobia is a neo-colonial discourse. As Tariq Ramadan has noted, literature produced during the colonial era was explicit in its organisation of Muslims into categories of 'good' Muslims who collaborated and 'bad' Muslims who resisted the colonial enterprise.⁷² This idea has been developed by Jonathan Birt, who has conceptualised the British government's post-2001 efforts to nurture a 'moderate' and acceptable British Islam as a neo-colonial strategy designed to divide Muslim religious leaders into those who could be depended upon to support the rhetorical needs of the British security state, and those who required surveillance and coercion.⁷³

Deeply connected to imperialism and colonialism is Orientalism, perhaps the most widely known and debated historical antecedent to Islamophobia. Orientalism, as Edward Said conceptualised it, is a cultural discourse of power that posits a unified 'West' against an imagined 'Orient' that is dehumanised and sensualised as barbaric, despotic and exotic.⁷⁴ Orientalism aimed to manage subjects of colonial and imperial power through an ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West.⁷⁵ Through its representation of Islam as a timelessly static, despotic civilisation that was resistant to change and rationalism, Orientalism legitimised domination by Western powers, and in

⁷² Tariq Ramadan, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim," *New Statesman*, 2010, <http://www.newstatesman.com/religion/2010/02/muslim-religious-moderation> [Retrieved 30 November 2010]. See also: Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2004).

⁷³ Jonathan Birt, "Good Imam, Bad Imam: Civic Religion and National Integration in Britain Post-9/11," *The Muslim World* 96, no. October (2006): 703. This idea is developed further in Chapter three, where I discuss the ways community cohesion and counterterrorism discourse served to create 'good' and 'bad' Muslim identities post 2001

⁷⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

turn produced a mirror image representation of the 'West' as superior.⁷⁶

Understanding Islamophobia as neo-Orientalism, several scholars have pointed to the way images of barbarism, primitive violence, and fundamental threat have become the mainstay of contemporary Islamophobic discourse, and highlight that the notion of Muslims as centrally constituted by their (timeless) Islamic identity encourages the understanding that people's politics can be read from their religion, hence the tendency to look to the Qur'an in order to understand contemporary political and social struggles.⁷⁷ Such a perspective is central to Samuel Huntington's clash of civilisations narrative, which rejuvenated Orientalism for the contemporary international relations environment, constructing Muslim societies (or civilisations in Huntington's parlance) as weak and primitive, and thus requiring Western intervention.⁷⁸

What has made Islam such a perennial enemy-outsider in this process has been its effortless transformation from religious rival, to imperial contender, to rival superpower, depending on the social realities and necessities of any given historical moment. As Vincent Geisser has noted, while anti-Muhammadism played a cohesive role in a medieval Europe divided by war, the 15th century saw

⁷⁶ Gema Martin-Munoz has highlighted that this essentialist vision of the determinative nature of cultures, compounded by the crystallisation of the monopolar global order following the end of the cold war, has exacerbated the tendency to treat Muslims and their societies as Islamic exceptions rather than the result of social, political and economic factors that actually occur in many other parts of the world. Gema Martin-Munoz, "Unconscious Islamophobia," *Human Architecture* VIII, no. 2, Fall (2010): 25.

⁷⁷ Erik Love, "Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism among Middle Eastern Americans," *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3–4 (2009): 409–410; Abduljalil Sajid, "Islamophobia: A New Word for an Old Fear," in *OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance*, vol. 17 (Cordoba, 2005), 5, <http://www.osce.org/cio/15618> [Retrieved 20 August 2011].; Andre Gingrich, "Anthropological Analyses of Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism in Europe," *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 4 (2005): 515; Ayhan Kaya, *Islamophobia as a Form of Governmentality: Unbearable Weightiness of the Politics of Fear* (Malmo: Malmo Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM), 2011), 12–13, <http://muep.mah.se/handle/2043/12704> [Retrieved 2 September 2012].

⁷⁸ SP Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49. See also: Phillips, "Remembering Islamic Empires: Speaking of Imperialism and Islamophobia," 97.

the religious threat to Christianity represented by Islam re-articulated into a geopolitical danger, in which rival non-Christian societies were increasingly viewed as temporal, rather than spiritual, threats.⁷⁹ Understanding Islamophobia as the historical heir to these discourses centres the constitutive centrality of imperial, colonial and Orientalist worldviews that have historically constructed Muslims as antithetically other to Western subjects and legitimised the domination of the former by the latter.

The tendency to see contemporary Islamophobia as merely a 'neo' form of these discourses, however, obscures important characteristics. In contrast to the historical discourses discussed above, which were directed at imperial or colonial subjects, and thus outsiders, contemporary European Islamophobia is a discourse directed specifically at European Muslims; residents or citizens of European states. Yahya Birt has argued from this perspective that Orientalism (including its 'neo' forms) should be contrasted with Islamophobia, since the former represents the management of external populations through discourses which construct Muslims as 'other', while the latter is primarily an assimilative state discourse which aims to manage and domesticate internal Muslim populations.⁸⁰ As Yasmin Hussain and Paul Bagguley have noted, Orientalism is usually identified with the Middle East and the racialization of Arabs, while the majority of British Muslims, and certainly those considered the most 'troublesome', have heritage in the Indian subcontinent.⁸¹ While this position draws attention to the different historical and political contexts that have produced these discourses, as Liz

⁷⁹ Geisser, "Intellectual and Ideological Debates on Islamophobia: A 'French Specificity' in Europe?," 40.

⁸⁰ Yahya Birt, "Governing Muslims after 9/11," in *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia, Symposium Papers*, ed. Bobby S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (Leeds: University of Leeds, 2008), 27.

⁸¹ Hussain and Bagguley, "Securitized Citizens: Islamophobia, Racism and the 7/7 London Bombings," 719.

Fekete has argued, the contemporary period has produced its own internal Orientalism directed at European Muslims and developed according to the political and social needs of the 'War on Terror'.⁸² The Orient, in the present period, is not treated as a separate geographical region, but as an essence located within Europe's Muslim population.

Perhaps a more pressing concern with focusing on these historical discourses is the possibility of reifying Islamophobia as something ancient, naturalised and thus ineradicable. The danger of considering it an atavistic tendency within European populations risks blinding scholars to the contingency and uses that such discourses have for the contemporary period. Fred Halliday, for example, has cautioned against this tendency, arguing that viewing Islamophobia as embedded in a collective western psyche or national character obscures these local differences and at the same time suggests that such attitudes are unchanging, when in fact they are demonstrably affected by contingent factors.⁸³ Although historical representations of Muslims and their contemporary re-articulation are important to note, manifestations of Islamophobia in the present period are clearly shaped by contemporary events and the novel discourses that have sought to explain them.

The historical approach discussed here is a partial explanation of Islamophobia. Although the connotations of earlier formations are essential to understanding many of the discourses that currently circulate about Muslims, they are not the whole story. The challenge for this approach is to explain why these discourses remain coherent and important for explaining Muslim behaviour

⁸² Liz Fekete, *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 193.

⁸³ Halliday, "'Islamophobia' Reconsidered," 895.

in the current period. Islamophobia is not just the modern incarnation of these old discourses. It has very specific instrumental uses for those employing this mode of understanding and explanation, and the focus on Islamophobia as a transcendent discourse whose incarnations are merely reformulations of older dominations runs the risk of submerging important aspects under an umbrella explanation that posits European societies as inescapably Occidentalists without explaining *why* and *how* Islamophobia today performs the role that was historically accomplished by these older discourses. In order to attend to these concerns, some of the most useful studies of Islamophobia have approached the phenomenon through a comparison with the discourses and strategies of racism.

Islamophobia and racism

As Erik Love has noted, comparing Islamophobia with racism has the analytical advantage of allowing scholars to draw upon the wealth of theoretical knowledge about race and ethnicity in order to explain how Islamophobia takes on a familiar pattern of racial scapegoating.⁸⁴ A key debate underpins this approach regarding how far theories of racism are comparable to Islamophobia. On one side of this debate stand scholars who argue that Islamophobia is analytically distinct from racism, with its own specificities that cannot be collapsed into the category of racism. This perspective contends that Islamophobia targets Muslims, a heterogeneous racial group, because of their religious identification, and that employing racism as an explanatory model conflates categories beyond their empirical referents.

⁸⁴ Love, "Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism among Middle Eastern Americans," 403–404.

On the other side, a second approach holds that since Islamophobia includes fear, prejudice and discrimination towards an out-group demarcated largely by physical appearance, it should be considered a particular type of racism and racist discourse. Using the concepts of new racism, cultural racism and racialization, proponents of this position argue that Muslims have come to occupy the position of racialized other in the contemporary period. The example of anti-Semitism has been used by scholars to demonstrate how religious identities can be and have been racialized according to the needs of particular historical, political and cultural contexts. A key argument against this perspective centres the possibility that the specificity of Islamophobia may be lost as it becomes merely another racism among many. Since scholars putting forward this position have argued that the term is both semantically and legally covered by understandings of racism, it begs the question of why a neologism like 'Islamophobia' is required at all.

Islamophobia as analytically distinct

The argument that Islamophobia is a separate concept, distinct from racism, is usually derived from Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown. In the second edition of their classic study of racism, Miles and Brown considered Islamophobia and argued that although Islamophobia and racism do interact, since the alleged distinctiveness of the Muslim is not biological it should not be considered a form of racism.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism*, 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 164. This position has been taken up by Hussain and Bagguley, who argue that since Islamophobia racializes Muslims on the basis of belief and practice, rather than biological characteristics,

This distinction between biological and religious difference is one of the most important debates surrounding the conceptualisation of Islamophobia. The most well-rehearsed argument to justify the analytical distinctiveness of Islamophobia is that concepts derived from the study of racism are inapplicable to a racially heterogeneous group whose only common denominator may be (perceived to be) religion.

The contention that Islam is a religion, not a race, has become fundamental to this position as articulated by the populist right and various 'muscular liberal' commentators. The English Defence League, for example, have regularly used this formula to deflect accusations of racism,⁸⁶ as have others who have criticised Islam and Muslims in hostile and disparaging terms.⁸⁷ Such arguments are usually based on the establishment of a fundamental difference between religion and race, where the former is constructed as something voluntary while the latter is considered innate. Employing this perspective, Kenan Malik has argued: 'you can't choose your skin colour; you can choose your beliefs. Religion is a set of beliefs. I can be hateful about other beliefs, such as conservatism or

extending the concept of racism to include it is an over inflation of the concept beyond its empirical referents. Hussain and Bagguley, "Securitized Citizens: Islamophobia, Racism and the 7/7 London Bombings," 718. Schiffer and Wagner have put forward a similar perspective arguing that Islamophobia draws upon centuries old anti-Muslim views which shape and extend the current empirical phenomenon, and that it is important not to lose sight of this specificity, which distinguishes it from other racisms. Schiffer and Wagner, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia - New Enemies, Old Patterns," 79.

⁸⁶ EDL, "National Demonstration: 25th February 2012, Hyde, Greater Manchester," *EDL News*, 15 February, 2012, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/230-national-demonstration-25th-february-2012-hyde-greater-manchester> [Retrieved 28 February 2012].

⁸⁷ For example, militant atheist Richard Dawkins deflected accusations of racism by stating: 'If you think Islam is a race, you are a racist yourself. The concept of race is controversial in biology, for complicated reasons. I could go into that, but I don't need to here. It's enough to say that if you can *convert* to something (or convert or apostatize out of it) it is not a race. If you are going to accuse me of racism, you'll have to do a lot better than that. Islam is a religion and you can choose to leave it or join it.' Richard Dawkins, "Calm Reflections after a Storm in a Tea Cup," *The Richard Dawkins Foundation*, 26 August, 2013, <https://richarddawkins.net/2013/08/calm-reflections-after-a-storm-in-a-teacup-polish-translation-below/> [Retrieved 1 December 2014].

communism. So why can't I be hateful about religion too?'⁸⁸ This position has become central to the arguments of those who reserve the right to criticise Islam and Muslims, and may be seen to operate within Islamophobic discourse in the same way as the 'disclaimer' in racist discourse.⁸⁹

The position that Islam is not a race also has some academic credibility. Henk Dekker and Jvander Noll, for example, have argued that Islamophobia is only a form of racism if it is believed that Islam is in the blood of Muslims and cannot be removed. In the absence of this biological determinism, and if it is believed that assimilation is a possibility, they argue that Islamophobia cannot be considered racism.⁹⁰ There are two problems with this position. First, that the race concept has always been intermingled with religion, and second, that the distinction between religious identities as voluntary and chosen, and racial identities as involuntary and externally assigned, is largely illusory and fails to take into account processes of racialization.

Contrary to the contemporary position that racial and religious differences are separate and distinct, there has been a recent increase in scholarship that seeks to demonstrate how religion intrinsically formed part of the race concept from its

⁸⁸ Kennan Malik, "The Islamophobia Myth," *Prospect Magazine*, 20 February, 2005, <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/islamophobiamyth> [Retrieved 28 November 2014]. Polly Toynbee reserved her right to be proudly Islamophobic through this discourse, stating 'race is something people cannot choose and it defines nothing about them as people. But beliefs are what people choose to identify with...' Polly Toynbee, "My Right to Offend a Fool," *The Guardian*, 10 June, 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/jun/10/religion.politicalcolumnists> [Retrieved 1 December 2014].

⁸⁹ See T. A. van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism* (London: Sage, 1993), 77–84. Writing in *The Guardian's Comment is Free*, Nesrine Malik has made this point, claiming that the 'Islam is not a race' argument essentially rehearses and recycles the familiar trope 'I'm not racist, but...' Nesrine Malik, "Message to Richard Dawkins: 'Islam Is Not a Race' Is a Cop out," *The Guardian, Comment Is Free*, 20 September, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/20/islam-race-richard-dawkins> [Retrieved 1 December 2014].

⁹⁰ Henk Dekker and Jolanda van der Noll, "Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism and Their Explanations," in *6th General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR)*, 25-27 August 2011 (Reykjavik, 2011), 5.

birth. Ramón Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants have argued along these lines that religious difference formed the first mark of 'Otherness' in the modern world, differentiating Europeans from the people they expelled and conquered.⁹¹ Jumaid Rana has also considered how religion and race co-mingled in the formation of modernity, and has argued that the secularisation of the race concept in the 18th and 19th centuries through scientific racism privileged biological difference as natural difference without including religion.⁹² The important point here is that religion has historically been *essential* to the race concept, and the contemporary understanding of race as a purely somatic and biological category is a relatively recent historical development.⁹³

On the second point, the idea that Islamophobia should not be analytically treated as a form of racism draws upon the recognition of a Muslim's choice to be Muslim.⁹⁴ This position - that Muslims may voluntarily relinquish their religious identity – is what Islamophobic commentators, such as those discussed above, depend upon in order to claim they are not racist whilst simultaneously disparaging Muslims on the basis of cultural belonging.

The 'voluntary' nature of religious identity has been discussed in detail by Nasar Meer, who argues that relying on this supposed (voluntary religious/involuntary racial) dichotomy leads logically to the position that only involuntary identities deserve protection from discrimination or hostility. As Meer

⁹¹ Grosfoguel and Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction," 2–3.

⁹² Jumaid Rana, "The Story of Islamophobia," *Souls* 9, no. 2 (2007): 153.

⁹³ Grosfoguel and Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction," 2; Raymond Taras, "Islamophobia Never Stands Still: Race, Religion, and Culture," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 423.

⁹⁴ Arzu Merali and Massoud Shadjareh, "Islamophobia – The New Crusade," *Islamic Human Rights Commission* May (2002), <http://www.ihrc.org.uk/file/ISLAMOPHOBIAthenewcrusade.pdf> [Retrieved 12 January 2011].

points out, even if an individual could distance herself from a racialized identity (by passing for a non-Muslim) in order to avoid racial stereotyping, hostility or discrimination, this would not destabilise the racialization of such identities.⁹⁵ Avoiding racial targeting by changing one's identity does not make the racial targeting any less real, it merely protects one against its immediate effects while the racialized system remains in place. As Arun Kundnani has argued, Islamophobia relies on a rationalisation and justification that claims that it is nothing more than criticism of a belief system, but this is undermined by the fact that religious belonging has come to act as a symbol of racial difference.⁹⁶

The symbolic nature of racialized belonging, and the role of perception, is fundamental. Since racialized assignment is usually something allocated from outside on to the racialized body of the 'other', the actual Muslimness of any individual targeted with Islamophobic discourse and practice is largely irrelevant. For example, it has been noted by several scholars that the anti-Muslim backlash that followed the September 11, 2001 hijackings saw Sikhs attacked because their assailants believed them to be Muslim.⁹⁷ In the contemporary climate of Islamophobic hostility the possession of a 'Muslim sounding' name, a particular ethnic or national heritage (particularly, in the British context, Pakistani), or clothes that are identified as 'Islamic', is enough to assign individuals a 'Muslim'

⁹⁵ Nasar Meer, "The Politics of Voluntary and Involuntary Identities: Are Muslims in Britain an Ethnic, Racial or Religious Minority?," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 1 (2008): 76–77.

⁹⁶ Arun Kundnani, *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 30.

⁹⁷ S. Poynting and V. Mason, "The Resistible Rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001," *Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 1 (2007): 72; Love, "Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism among Middle Eastern Americans," 402; Gabriele Marranci, "Multiculturalism, Islam and the Clash of Civilisations Theory: Rethinking Islamophobia," *Culture and Religion* 5, no. 1 (2004): 107.

identity, and religiosity, or lack thereof, has little to do with perceived belonging in a racialized group.⁹⁸

Islamophobia as a form of (new, cultural) racism

These arguments lead to the second major position within the comparative approach, which holds that there is nothing analytically distinct about Islamophobia that has not already been covered by the concept of racism. This position relies on the notion of racialization and cultural racism, and fundamentally argues that race has always been a flexible social construction, historically adapted according to the particular needs of specific social, political, economic and historical conditions.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Tufyal Choudhury and Helen Fenwick, "The Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Muslim Communities," *Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 72*, 2011, 57, http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/counter-terrorism_research_report_72.pdf [Retrieved 5 August 2013]; Michael Humphrey, "Culturalising the Abject: Islam, Law and Moral Panic in the West," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 2, no. 1 (2007): 9–25; C. Alexander, "Imagining the Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Masculinity and Youth after 'the Riots,'" *Critical Social Policy* 24, no. 4 (2004): 526–549; Sajid, "Islamophobia: A New Word for an Old Fear," 138; Junaid Rana, "More than Nothing: The Persistence of Islamophobia in 'Post-Racial' Racism," *Global Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (2010), <http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=482> [Retrieved 21 October 2013].

⁹⁹ Ibid., 3–4; Diane Frost, "Islamophobia: Examining Causal Links between the State and 'race Hate' from 'below,'" *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 28, no. 11/12 (2008): 547; Love, "Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism among Middle Eastern Americans," 404. From this perspective, it is argued that Islamophobia is grounded in fears of economic deprivation in a period of globalisation, and as such is a particular form of racism which culturalizes politics through discourses of innate cultural superiority which aim to safeguard the economic interests of the Western capitalist nations. Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason have summarised this perspective succinctly, stating 'As with previous empires, the new global hegemony has its racisms, which confirm ideologically its fitness to rule and the inferiority of those peoples and cultures that it subjugates in doing so.' Poynting and Mason, "The Resistible Rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001," 62. Amir Saaed has also articulated this perspective, highlighting the intrinsic connection between Muslims and unwanted migrants in an era of globalisation, in which the rhetoric of exclusion is specifically aimed at those considered to have inferior cultural norms. In this sense, he argues that the Western capitalist nations maintain their economic privilege through the World Trade Organisation, the international Monetary Fund and G8, through hegemonic discourses which mystify and culturalize prosperity as the natural outcome of Western political institutions rather than the economic workings of a system of exploitation. Amir Saaed, "Islamophobia and Capitalism," *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia, Symposium Papers* (Leeds, 2008), 16–17,

Racialization refers to the process by which 'others' are created that can contain the economic and social fears of a society by acting as a body onto which these fears may be projected. This concept helps us to understand how a plethora of others have historically filled the role of out-group. For the study of Islamophobia it also bridges the arguments of the two positions described above, by detailing the way in which phenotypical and cultural signifiers have come to have racial meaning. In this sense it provides a rejoinder to the argument that Islam is not a race, by showing how Muslims have been and are contemporarily racialized.

As those who are uncomfortable with the concept of Islamophobia have pointed out, Muslims are neither racially nor culturally homogenous.¹⁰⁰ Islamophobia, which implies that Muslims are racialized and 'othered' as a *group*, is therefore controversial. To the charge that Islam is not a race, and that the analytical tools of racism are not appropriate, scholars have responded that Muslim culture has been racialized to the extent that it is now widely considered to be innate, something from which Muslims cannot escape. This position holds that Islamophobia should be understood as an instance of new racism.¹⁰¹

Within the new racism thesis, religion is not viewed as a matter of private contemplation but is considered a public, externally assigned identity that cannot

sociology.leeds.ac.uk. See also: Robert Ford, "Force for Integration or Source of Hostility? British Nationalism and Attitudes to Immigrant and Muslim Minorities," *Political Studies Association*, 2008, <http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2008/Ford.pdf> [Retrieved 11 January 2011]; Arun Kundnani, *The Muslims Are Coming!* (London: Verso, 2014), 11.

¹⁰⁰ Javier Rosón Lorente, "Discrepancies around the Use of the Term 'Islamophobia,'" *Human Architecture* VIII, no. 2, Fall (2010): 119; Bruno Etienne, "Islam and Violence," *History and Anthropology* 18, no. 3 (2007): 239.

¹⁰¹ Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe*.

be simply disengaged from.¹⁰² New racism focuses on the challenge that difference presents to 'our way of life', and Islamophobia exemplifies this in its unrelenting focus on the unacceptable and incompatible nature of Muslims' cultural difference. It is the cultural turn of new racism that has allowed overtly Islamophobic groups to explicitly reject traditional racism, whilst at the same time using its frames and discourses in order to exclude culturally defined out-groups.¹⁰³

The concept of cultural racism has become especially useful in explaining Islamophobia within the paradigms of the new racism. From this perspective, scholars have argued that individuals are racialized through the biologised and naturalised understanding of culture as determinative. Drawing on national belonging and national identity, proponents of this position argue that biological

¹⁰² Burak Erdenir, "Islamophobia qua Racial Discrimination," in *Muslims in 21st Century Europe: Structural and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Anna Triandafyllidou (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 35.

¹⁰³ Christopher Kyriakides, Satnam Virdee, and Tariq Modood, "Racism, Muslims and the National Imagination," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 291.

There is a wealth of scholarship on how the disavowal of traditional racism has become a standard trope of European extreme right groups in their 'rebranding' for the 21st century. The incorporation of cultural frames of reference for the 'othering' of out-groups has led several scholars to argue that Islamophobia has become a basic ideological feature and core strategy of the European extreme right José Pedro Zúquete, "The European Extreme-Right and Islam: New Directions?," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13, no. 3 (2008): 321–344; L. Fekete, "Enlightened Fundamentalism? Immigration, Feminism and the Right," *Race & Class* 48, no. 2 (2006): 11–12; Christopher Allen, "Justifying Islamophobia: A Post-9/11 Consideration of the European Union and British Contexts," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, no. 3 (2004): 8–9; Matthew Feldman, "From Radical-Right Islamophobia to 'Cumulative Extremism': A Paper on the Shifting Focus of Hatred," *Faith Matters*, 2012, <http://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/islamophobia.pdf> [Retrieved 28 May 2015]. This trend has been identified strongly within the Front National in France Hans-Georg Betz and Susi Meret, "Revisiting Lepanto: The Political Mobilization against Islam in Contemporary Western Europe," *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3–4 (2009): 313–334., and the British National Party and the English Defence League in the UK (the latter is discussed in detail in this thesis) John E Richardson, "Race and Racial Difference: The Surface and Depth of BNP Ideology," in *British National Party: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Nigel Copsey and G Macklin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 38–61; C Wood and W M L Finlay, "British National Party Representations of Muslims in the Month after the London Bombings: Homogeneity, Threat, and the Conspiracy Tradition," *The British Journal of Social Psychology* 47, no. 4 (2008): 707–26; G. O. Edwards, "A Comparative Discourse Analysis of the Construction of 'in-Groups' in the 2005 and 2010 Manifestos of the British National Party," *Discourse & Society* 23, no. 3 (2012): 245–258; Nigel Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy, Labour*, 2nd ed. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

notions of race have been replaced by cultural definitions, which perceive threatening value differences emerging from religion, tradition or lifestyle rather than nature or biology.¹⁰⁴ These differences are essentialised within Islamophobic ideology through a construction of Muslim culture as primordial and pre-modern, given to fundamentalism, irrationality, despotism and patriarchal relations, and therefore incompatible with Western democratic societies.¹⁰⁵ This essentialisation of culture presents the racialized group as absolutely determined by their culture in such a way that it is naturalised and biologised.¹⁰⁶ The construction of Muslims within culturally racist ideological frames leads not only to their 'othering' and relegation to out-group status, but, as Zuhail Yesilyurt Gündüz has noted, the consistent representation of Muslims as threatening leads discrimination against them to be seen as rational, reasonable and justified.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps the midway point between the two positions identified here is the notion that Islamophobia is a mix of old and new racisms, an independent ideological construct that nevertheless incorporates and reframes biological and cultural racisms on an ad hoc basis.¹⁰⁸ For those who argue from this perspective it is important to refrain from classifying Islamophobia only as cultural racism, because that would deny the obviously biological frames that are employed at

¹⁰⁴ Erdenir, "Islamophobia qua Racial Discrimination," 36; Saaed, "Islamophobia and Capitalism," 16.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander, "Imagining the Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Masculinity and Youth after 'the Riots,'" 534; Martin-Munoz, "Unconscious Islamophobia," 26.

¹⁰⁶ Grosfoguel and Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction," 4.

¹⁰⁷ Zuhail Yesilyurt Gündüz, "The European Union at 50—Xenophobia, Islamophobia and the Rise of the Radical Right," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2010): 45.

¹⁰⁸ Mike Cole and Alpesh Maisuria, "Racism and Islamophobia in Post 7/7 Britain: Critical Race Theory, (xeno-)racialisation, Empire and Education - a Marxist Analysis," in *Class in Education: Knowledge, Pedagogy, Subjectivity*, ed. Deborah Kelsh, Dave Hill, and Shiela Macrine (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 117. Mike Cole considers Islamophobia to be a form of new-hybridist racism, by which he means that ambiguous racisms are incorporated into the phenomenon and it can be colour coded or non-colour coded, cultural or biological, or indeed a mixture of all of these depending on the needs of any given situation Cole, "A Plethora of 'Suitable Enemies': British Racism at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century," 1679.

times. By the same token, considering it as merely biological racism denies the specificity of Islamophobia, particularly the theological hatred of Islam that is regularly articulated in Islamophobic discourse. To illustrate the importance of this difference, the example of Islamophobic hate crimes is instructive. Such crimes usually incorporate a violence against the body of the racialized Muslim subject, a phenomenon that is typical of racist violence, however, empirical studies suggest that individuals are not targeted on the basis of their race. Rather, perpetrators are moved to act against symbolic somatic features such as headscarves, turbans, or 'Islamic clothing'.¹⁰⁹ That symbols of Islam have come to have racial significance is a central tenet of racialization and the new racism thesis, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, as Grosfoguel and Mielants have argued, 'the tropes are a repetition of old biological racist discourses and the people who are the target of Islamophobic discourses are the traditional colonial subjects of the Western Empires, that is, the "usual suspects."' ¹¹⁰

Chris Allen has cautioned against the unreflective use of the concept of cultural racism in understanding Islamophobia. The danger of this approach, for Allen, is that it is essentialising in itself, potentially denying processes of self-identification, the inherency of diversity and the embodiment of difference with Muslim communities in the UK and across the world.¹¹¹ The cultural racism thesis also potentially binds us to the disparate reasons people have for their hostility towards Muslims, which may be religious, cultural, xenophobic or racist. The

¹⁰⁹ Lambert and Githens-Mazer, "Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies 2010," 121–125; Susan Carland, "Islamophobia, Fear of Loss of Freedom, and the Muslim Woman," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 4 (2011): 471–472.

¹¹⁰ Grosfoguel and Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction," 4.

¹¹¹ Allen, *Islamophobia*, 154–155.

point here is that Islamophobia cannot be *a priori* theorised as a particular form of racism, since its articulations are complex and variable and stem from differing histories across national contexts.¹¹² The construction of Muslims as outside and other in the European imagination is contingent, and as Bobby Sayyid has argued, cultural and biological racisms are not as distinct as often presented. Races were never entirely biologically determined but have always been socially and politically produced ideologies, whereby bodies are marked with distinctions comprising biological, religious, cultural, historical and geographical differences.¹¹³

Anti-Semitism

Within the comparative perspective, one of the most useful analogies for understanding contemporary Islamophobia is anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism provides a comparable example of how religious and cultural differences have been historically racialized to designate a specific religiously defined group as a racial other.

Pnina Werbner, in examining the debates around the racialization of religion, has presented a typology of three anthropological racial folk devils in order to explain how different racial subjects occupy varied spaces in the social imagination.¹¹⁴ The first, the slave, contains the fear of the physically powerful and out of control, as is represented by the black street mugger. Those groups

¹¹² Hussain and Bagguley, "Securitized Citizens: Islamophobia, Racism and the 7/7 London Bombings," 720; Poynting and Mason, "The Resistible Rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001," 63.

¹¹³ Bobby S. Sayyid, "Are Unicorns Muslim?," in *Thinking Thru' Islamophobia, Symposium Papers*, ed. Bobby S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (Leeds: University of Leeds, March 2008, 2008), 71.

¹¹⁴ Pnina Werbner, "Islamophobia," *Anthropology Today* 21, no. 1 (2005): 5–9.

who are assimilated, successful and wealthy come to be represented by the second folk devil, the witch, who crystallises fears of the disguised malevolent stranger, a breakdown of trust and a nation divided against itself. Werbner considers this role to have been filled archetypally by Jews, within anti-Semitic discourse. Finally, the most frightening folk devil for contemporary society, Werbner contends, is the Grand Inquisitor. This position is filled in the social imagination by the Muslim, who invokes images of puritanical Christianity and the attack on permissive society, and is neither disguised nor assimilated, but 'upfront, morally superior, openly aggressive, denying the validity of other cultures.'¹¹⁵

There is certainly something recognisable in Werbner's cast of racial folk devils, particularly in the distinguishing of biological from culturally racist stereotypes and the fears they represent.¹¹⁶ However, the different contextual roles these racial others play should not blind us to cross-category movement and the way that Muslims have been placed in a number of threatening positions according to the historical needs of any given period.¹¹⁷ Meer and Noorani have demonstrated that contrary to the contemporary image of assimilated Jews (the witch), European anti-Semitic thought has historically constructed 'the Jew' as an

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7–8.

¹¹⁶ This triad of European racial others has also been put forward by Theo Goldberg, who similarly argues that the European racial imagination, although usually understood in dualistic black/white terms, has been intrinsically ordered around religious others; the Jew and the Muslim, both of whom performed different historical functions for European identity formation. In distinguishing between these figures, Goldberg states 'The figure of the Muslim, alongside that of the Jew, has historically bookended modern Europe's explicit historical anxieties about black-ness. 'The Muslim' has haunted the continent from the earliest moments of its modernity, inherited of course from the medieval contest between Mediterranean Christianity and Islam.' David Theo Goldberg, "Racial Europeanization," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006): 344.

¹¹⁷ Meer and Noorani have argued along these lines that Muslims may also have been assigned the role of witches and slaves, and the characterisation as inquisitor figures in contemporary Europe belies the fact that they lack the discursive or structural legitimacy associated with this characterisation. Nasar Meer and Tehseen Noorani, "A Sociological Comparison of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Muslim Sentiment in Britain," *The Sociological Review* 56, no. 2 (2008): 199.

unassimilable racial other, not only inherently different, but deliberately aloof, self-segregating and loyal to a nation outside the one in which they resided.¹¹⁸ Such characterisations are directly comparable to contemporary discourses which represent Muslims as self-segregating and loyal to a global ummah above their nation. Schiffer and Wagner have similarly argued that the contemporary racialization of Muslims bears direct comparison to discourses of anti-Semitism in Europe's recent history. Represented as an internal enemy, targeted with accusations that they are a camouflaged fifth column and presumed to be primarily loyal to their own religious group, Muslims are targeted with the same tropes that were the mainstay of classical anti-Semitism.¹¹⁹

The mixture of racial, religious and ethnic prejudices that form anti-Semitism have been highlighted by several scholars as providing evidence for the latter as a useful concept to aid understanding of Islamophobia.¹²⁰ In this schema, anti-Semitism's focus on the danger that Jews posed to the unity and cohesion of the national community bears direct comparison with contemporary national questioning of Muslims across Europe.¹²¹ Additionally, as both Arun Kundnani and Nathan Lean have highlighted, conspiracy theories have played an important role in both of these discourses. The 'Sharia conspiracy' and the 'Eurabia thesis' have come to dominate right-wing Islamophobic discourse, and hold that through stealth jihad and demographic challenges to democracy in Europe, Muslim political activity represents a secret plan to impose a totalitarian government on

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 203. Meer and Noorani also argue that there are differences in these discourses, particularly in the way Jewish power has historically been represented as hidden and covert, while Muslim aggression is considered overt and in the open. Ibid., 209.

¹¹⁹ Schiffer and Wagner, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia - New Enemies, Old Patterns," 82.

¹²⁰ Taras, "'Islamophobia Never Stands Still': Race, Religion, and Culture," 425; Geisser, "Intellectual and Ideological Debates on Islamophobia: A 'French Specificity' in Europe?," 44; Erdenir, "Islamophobia qua Racial Discrimination," 36.

¹²¹ Arun Kundnani, "Integrationism: The Politics of Anti-Muslim Racism," *Race & Class* 48, no. 4 (2007): 30.

the world.¹²² What both anti-Semitic and Islamophobic conspiracy theories have in common is the fantasy that a group with little power has the ability to impose its (unified) will onto society, and the corresponding rationalisation and justification of discrimination and hostility as a means to protect the institutions that the nation holds dear.

Criticisms of the comparison between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have ranged from the denial that anti-Semitism is a form of racism (cultural or otherwise)¹²³ to the assertion that there exist important differences in the racialization of Muslims and Jews that render the comparison problematic.¹²⁴ Much of the confusion that mars this comparison results from differences in the role that anti-Semitism has played historically to the one it plays today. As Chris Allen has argued, Islamophobia, in contrast to contemporary anti-Semitism, is perceived to be caused to some extent by the actions and words of radical Muslims. Muslims are therefore considered to be responsible for challenging Islamophobic views by distancing themselves from such articulations.¹²⁵ That Jews are not considered responsible for anti-Semitism is undoubtedly true in

¹²² Kundnani, *The Muslims Are Coming!*, 249; Nathan Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 8.

¹²³ See Fernando Bravo López, "Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 4 (2011): 558; Christian Joppke, "Limits of Integration Policy: Britain and Her Muslims," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 459.

¹²⁴ For example, Rana argues that the historical conceptualisation of Jews was of an enemy within, whereas Muslims were a competing nation. This has important consequences for the historical discourses that are incorporated into contemporary forms of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Rana, "The Story of Islamophobia," 158. Dekker and Noll have highlighted this tendency in their empirical research which suggests that the two are different constructs and are embodied in differing evaluations of contact between majority group members and both Jews and Muslims, and the different levels of anxiety, fear and threat experienced. Dekker and Noll, "Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism and Their Explanations," 14.

¹²⁵ Discussing the Runnymede Trust report *Anti-Semitism: A very light sleeper*, Allen has drawn attention to the assertion that Christians, Muslims and Sikhs have an obligation to ensure positive attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, whilst Jewish people themselves are not appointed similar responsibilities. He argues that in the contemporary period Jewish people are not considered to bear any responsibility for anti-Semitic attitudes, whilst Muslims are viewed as somehow collectively responsible for, and charged with challenging, the closed views of Islamophobia. Allen, *Islamophobia*, 57–58.

post-holocaust Europe, however, it has not always been this way, and it is important to differentiate between the pre- and post- Second World War narratives that have constructed Jews as cultural, religious and racial others.

In doing this, Matti Bunzl has drawn attention to the different function that discourses of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia play in contemporary Europe. He argues that traditional 19th and early 20th century anti-Semitism was designed to exclude Jews from the national body, based on the notion that Jews represented a racial threat to a nation that was ethnically pure.¹²⁶ Such thinking eventually culminated in the genocidal exclusion of Jews from European nation states, however contemporary anti-Semitism (which is usually attributed to Europe's Muslim populations), has no comparable agenda.¹²⁷ As Bunzl has argued, there is simply no contemporary debate on the legitimacy of the Jewish presence in Europe.¹²⁸ While calls for Jewish exclusion were pervasive in European politics during the interwar period, today this goal is not on any public agenda. In contrast, Islamophobia is a genuine political issue in Europe.¹²⁹ Bunzl concludes that as a phenomenon of the current age, Islamophobia is not mobilised to protect the ethnic purity of the nation, as was interwar anti-Semitism, but to

¹²⁶ Matti Bunzl, "Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe," *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 4 (2005): 502.

¹²⁷ Bunzl argues that Jews, when targeted with anti-Semitism by young disenfranchised Muslims in France, for example, are not targeted on the basis that Jews threaten the ethnically pure French nation, but because they *are* European and as such are part of the European hegemony that marginalises Muslims and accounts for the suffering of Palestinians. *Ibid.*, 503–504.

¹²⁸ Moreover, as Burak Erdenir has argued, following the Second World War, Jews were retroactively incorporated into European heritage, through increasingly popular definitions of Europe as a 'Judeo-Christian' civilisation, a discourse that would have been unthinkable in the early 20th century when Jews were considered Europe's significant others. Erdenir, "Islamophobia qua Racial Discrimination," 33–34.

¹²⁹ He argues that across the continent there is a significant and growing questioning of Muslim belonging in Europe, including debates on immigration, the status of Islam, security and terrorism issues and Turkey's accession to the EU, all of which are on the agenda of both European nation states and the supranational body of the EU. Bunzl, "Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe," 506.

safeguard European civilisation.¹³⁰ Foregrounding both the historical and contemporary role played by Muslims and Jews in the conception of European identity, this position holds that while Jews threatened the nation, Muslims threaten the civilisation of Europe. This argument, underlining the differences between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in order to grasp their specificities, is one of the most significant contributions of those, like Bunzl, who challenge the comparison between the two.

The understanding of Islamophobia through comparison with other discourses of exclusion brings to the fore the specificities of this particular phenomenon. The main advantage of the comparative approach rests in its appropriation of the vast theoretical work that has been undertaken with regard to understanding racism and anti-Semitism in the second half of the 20th century. By comparing Islamophobia with similar strategies of exclusion a much deeper understanding is attained of the mechanisms by which out-groups are formed. Concepts such as new racism, cultural racism, and racialization are hugely important in order to understand contemporary Islamophobia. Similarly, strategies of religio-cultural othering, highlighted by work on anti-Semitism, has a great deal of applicability if we are to understand the ways in which religious and cultural signifiers come to have racial meaning. Further, and important to the current thesis, comparison with racisms helps to illuminate not only what Islamophobia is but also why it exists. By considering the usefulness of racisms for particular human societies at particular historical moments, theories of racism potentially provide an explanation for why Islamophobia should have traction and resonance at this particular moment.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Notwithstanding the advantages of this approach, there remain reasons to be cautious about its usefulness in understanding Islamophobia. First, by conceptualising Islamophobia as a form of racism, its specificities may be lost and subsumed within a larger, more universal explanation. Should Islamophobia become just another racism, the uses and purposes of this specifically religio-cultural form of othering may be obscured and buried in an analytical framework whose concepts derive from a very specific history. The extent to which these concepts, emerging from a dualistic black/white racial structure, can be stretched to include more covert, subtle and cultural racial forms requires more than mere conceptual borrowing. As the discussion of historical antecedents of Islamophobia demonstrated, specific histories and contexts must be considered in order to understand the particular tropes that make up Islamophobic expression.

A corollary to this argument encompasses the fear that should Islamophobia be treated as a racism, legislation that tackles hate speech may be extended to repress criticism of religion and thus endanger free expression. This is an important point, and the freedom to criticise religious ideas must always remain apart from the freedom to denigrate and harass people based on their real or perceived group membership. However, it should not draw attention from the very real comparison between racism (including anti-Semitism) and Islamophobia.

Second, understanding Islamophobia as a form of racism risks flattening the concept as constant, unchanging and one dimensional. This raises an important issue central to the debate on Islamophobia: namely, whether there is such a thing as 'Islamophobia' and whether it is more analytically correct to consider 'Islamophobias'. The latter concept draws analytical attention to the different

uses differently situated speakers and societies make of the concept, and points to the need to consider each instance individually, in its particular social, historical and discursive context. While there is growing sympathy with this position,¹³¹ owing to the sheer complexity of Islamophobia and the contingent nature of each Islamophobic utterance, analyses that compartmentalise in such a way may lose sight of the bigger picture. And this bigger picture is clearly important. Islamophobia is always expressed in a local context, but it draws upon and adds to a larger collection of narratives that are both temporally and spatially formed: historical narratives that cherry pick from older discourses of exclusion, and geographical contexts that place certain racialized 'others' in an adversarial relationship with national, European and Western social collectives. While there are certainly differences between and within the contemporary expressions of Islamophobia it is important not to lose sight of what binds them together and makes them coherent for a large proportion of the contemporary population of the vast aggregate we call the contemporary 'West'.

Both of these critiques point to the importance of foregrounding the concept of racialization. This concept alerts us not only to the way in which certain group characteristics come to be seen as essential racial signifiers which mark their bearers with the status of 'other', but also how particular historical and political contexts condition the forms they take and the purposes for which they are wielded. By exploring the strategies of racist discourse construction, comparative analyses of racism and Islamophobia help us understand Islamophobia in a larger, more global context.

¹³¹ Zafar Iqbal, "Understanding Islamophobia: Conceptualizing and Measuring the Construct," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 4 (2010): 174; Sajid, "Islamophobia: A New Word for an Old Fear," 2; Miles and Brown, *Racism*, 165; Allen, *Islamophobia*, 34.

Conclusion

What is clear from any study of the literature dealing with Islamophobia is that, although there is a burgeoning interest in the phenomenon, there is little agreement on the best way to approach it. This is part of the reason why defining Islamophobia causes so much controversy. The pervasive inability to succinctly define the phenomenon is one of Islamophobia studies' greatest weaknesses. Yet, it may also be a source of strength for the field. The large and growing debate over what constitutes Islamophobia means that there are a number of positions being fought over. The very definition of the term is just one of the areas subject to profound debate and analysis that can only enrich our understanding.

Islamophobia is, centrally, a political phenomenon. Acceptance of any one definition therefore necessarily involves the acceptance of certain truth claims, it involves political acceptance of the social relations that are described by that definition, and it points to particular courses of social action. When scholars make a choice between definitions of Islamophobia they reveal material commitments to particular world views, from a particularly privileged social and political vantage point (the academy). The struggle over the definition of Islamophobia is thus a central issue in majority and minority community recognition and relations in Britain, and any academic analysis of the phenomenon must critically consider these discursive choices and their effects.

This is also revealed by an inquiry into the various approaches to analysing the phenomenon. Historical and comparative approaches take differing positions on

what Islamophobia is, and therefore focus on different objects of analysis and aid our understanding of the phenomenon in different ways. While historical approaches tend to help us understand where it comes from, comparative approaches help us apprehend what it is. Yet neither, on their own or together, really explain *why* it is. What is it about Islamophobia that makes it an attractive discourse? Why do people employ narratives and strategies that work to form Muslims as an out-group? What benefits do individuals and groups gain from the discursive work that constructs Muslims as fundamentally different?

On the whole, I find the insights of the comparative approach to be most useful in explaining Islamophobia and the mechanisms by which it works. By encompassing both theological and cultural hostility, explanations that conceptualise Islamophobia as cultural racism attend to those Islamophobic expressions that straddle both. Also, by highlighting the ways Muslims have been racialized as a group, this explanation centres essentialising strategies that work to biologised culture. Yet without the insights of the historical perspective and the work contributed by scholars who have sought to centre the civilisational discourses that have historically and contemporarily formed identities in Europe and the West, the understanding of Islamophobia as a form of racism tends to focus inordinately on nationalistic concerns and may cause us to lose sight of the universalising thrust of Islamophobia.

Although Islamophobia undoubtedly plays a role in constructing national boundaries and social collectivities along insider/outsider status, even a cursory glance at British Islamophobic discourse reveals that there are larger shared narratives being employed, which incorporate continental and civilizational imagined communities. Even when instrumentalised for very specific purposes,

for example, the building of a mosque in a small post-industrial town, Islamophobia draws upon extra-national social and cultural discourses and identities that are believed to be pertinent. The civilisational thrust of the discourse is indisputable, yet has been only sparsely addressed in the literature. This is one of the many layers of Islamophobia that must be considered. And this leads back to the *why* question. Why does Islamophobia so often address itself to existential angst about the imagined civilizational community of the West? And why do local and national discourses of Islamophobia so readily incorporate the idea of the West even when they are specifically directed towards local or national issues?

This chapter has highlighted the necessity of considering Islamophobia from several analytical perspectives in order to gain greater understanding of its form and content. Islamophobia has many layers; historical antecedents that are recycled, theories of 'otherness' that draw boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, and strategies of essentialisation and exclusion that mark Muslims out as 'them', intrinsically different to 'us'. Without considering how all of these interplay within contemporary Islamophobic articulations, analysis of the phenomena is partial and incomplete. In order to understand Islamophobia, then, it is essential to consider the intersection of these levels of analysis. The analytical contribution of both historical explorations and wide ranging theoretical accounts which foreground broad social narratives can be brought together. The present thesis aims to synthesise these perspectives in order to analyse Islamophobia through a consideration of several levels of context.

I have argued in this review that the approaches outlined must all be considered if we are to understand the contemporary relevance of Islamophobia.

Without an understanding of the historical context, the tropes that are recycled and the identities that are incorporated are meaningless. Similarly, a theoretical understanding of what Islamophobia might be is essential in order to consider the discursive strategies employed by actors. The present analysis thus considers each of these levels by asking: What is British Islamophobia? What is its structure? And what discursive strategies are used to construct and represent Muslims and Islam in contemporary Britain?

However, the proliferation of Islamophobic discourse in the contemporary period is not just confined to Britain. At the present historical moment there is widespread acceptance that there is something *different* about Muslims that accounts for many of the social problems and issues confronting Western societies. For a large segment of the contemporary West, Islamophobia explains the world and provides an ideological blueprint of how to fix it. Social narratives of such power do not materialise spontaneously. The question that scholars have failed to adequately address is the central consideration of the present thesis: Why is Islamophobia increasingly seen to have explanatory potential for the social world? And, more importantly, why now?

Chapter Three - British Muslims and the construction of British national identity after 2001: The community cohesion and counterterrorism discourses

Introduction

The previous chapter argued that Islamophobic articulations must be placed in their social and political context in order to understand the tropes and narratives that are drawn upon. This chapter provides the context for the empirical chapters that follow, and argues that after 2001 British national identity was increasingly defined against a discursively constructed Muslim identity that served to delineate the contours of national belonging.

Two government sanctioned discourses were central to this process, and entwined with one another to produce Muslims as both domestically and internationally threatening. The first, engendered by the Northern uprisings in the summer of 2001, was community cohesion discourse, which posited that domestic unrest had been caused by the proliferation of self-segregating, culturally defined communities who lived parallel lives with little contact or understanding. The second was counterterrorism discourse, which sought to respond to terrorist attacks by dismantling the ideology believed to underpin them. Both discourses proffered values as the solution to violence. For the former, British values were the uniting concept into which problematic communities were expected to integrate. For the latter, a state-sanctioned and value driven British Islam was put forward as the solution to imported foreign

extremism. Both discourses relied on a culturalized explanation of violence and unrest, in which Islam was singled out as determining, dangerous and threatening.

By considering the representations that were gathered around these central discourses, this chapter demonstrates how Muslims were constructed after 2001 as oppositional and antithetical to British national identity. This construction pivoted on the splitting of the category 'Muslim' into good and bad, marginalising other important identifications such as class, race, ethnicity and gender in order to produce a good Muslim subject who could be integrated and a bad Muslim who represented everything the nation was not.

Community cohesion discourse performed this function by producing a bad un-integratable Muslim subject whose tendency toward self-segregation threatened British values and social cohesion. Community cohesion discourse targeted bad Muslims through initiatives which admonished them for speaking native languages at home, tightened immigration controls to make transnational marriages (and thus the importation of foreign cultures) more difficult, and citizenship courses for established migrants, all of which sought to coerce them in to being 'good'. At the same time, counterterrorism discourse constructed 'bad' Muslims as those who existentially threatened the nation through their adherence to violent jihadist ideology. The 'home-grown' nature of the July 2005 London transport bombings and the understanding that terrorism required tacit support from communities led to a reorientation towards the domestic Muslim population, whereby Muslims were presumed 'bad' until proven otherwise. Counterterrorism discourse and practice sought to prevent terrorism through the promotion of Islamic organisations whose values were endorsed by the state.

Although the discourses of community cohesion and counterterrorism are analytically separated in order to isolate the central representations gathered around each, it is important to state from the outset that this separation is artificial. The discourses emerged at a similar time, were reinforced and supported by one another, and were nourished by and consolidated an overarching anti-Muslim sentiment that relied on the construction of Muslims as the bearers of threat and blame.

Community cohesion and counterterrorism discourse performed two interrelated functions. First, in the post-2001 British context bad Muslims were blamed for the central problems of the day, exteriorising and othering threats of social unrest and terrorism. Second, by blaming these problems on 'others' the solution was considered to lie in re-stating 'our' values. These twin understandings within the central discourses served to bolster British nationalism through a focus on the articulation of national identity as a solution to the problems thought to be created by excessive Muslim cultural diversity. The analysis first traces the discursive construction of the bad Muslim within these discourses, before considering the way in which British identity was reinforced through the articulation of Muslim cultural dysfunction.

The Northern uprisings and the community cohesion discourse

The summer of 2001 saw widespread and sustained confrontations between youths and police in former mill towns of the North West of England. Oldham, Burnley and Bradford had in common huge levels of long-term unemployment, social deprivation and low educational achievement, and all contained large Asian

communities residentially segregated from white areas and in fierce competition for scarce resources.

In Oldham, heightened tensions were generated by several local incidents, including skirmishes between visiting football supporters and local Asian youths and the framing by local and national newspapers of an attack on an elderly white war veteran, who was mugged and beaten by three Asians, as racially motivated. In response to this, the far-right National Front (NF) marched on Oldham in May, triggering three nights of confrontation between riot-gear clad police and Asian youths determined to defend their neighbourhoods.¹³² Similar scenes played out in Burnley that June and Bradford a month later. Hearsay and rumour that racist gangs were planning to march led hundreds of young Asian men on to the streets to defend their communities, and the heavy handed tactics of the authorities led to escalation and prolonged confrontation between youths and the police.

Despite the significance of the socio-economic problems of the affected areas and the immediate threat from racist gangs that had triggered the uprisings, the popular press, community leaders, and official government inquiries all chose to highlight culture, and specifically Muslim culture, as the essential cause of the Northern disturbances.

The scale and intensity of the uprising in Bradford, as well as its construction in the national imaginary as the 'archetypal polarised city', meant that this area came to be the focus of much of the post-uprising discussion. The disturbances in Bradford were officially categorised as a riot, resulting in an estimated £27

¹³² M. Jan-Khan, "The Right to Riot?," *Community Development Journal* 38, no. 1 (2003): 36–37.

million worth of damage and injuring more than 300 police officers.¹³³ The shock engendered by the images of the Bradford riot played a large part in cementing the representations that later gained currency. Amongst a British public used to seeing Asians as placid, the spectacle of burned out cars and buildings, and young Asian men hurling missiles at police for hours was incredibly powerful and frightening.¹³⁴ This very visible apparently racial aspect of the disturbances led to them being categorised in the media as 'race riots',¹³⁵ yet this initial interpretation was swiftly overtaken by a culturalized understanding of the causes of the violence.

The Bradford District Race Review¹³⁶ (BDRR), known as the Ouseley Report, was commissioned prior to the riots, although its publication coincided with the uprising and its central conclusions were therefore taken to provide some explanation for the violence. Despite its title, the language of the Review focused on 'cultural communities', indicating that a culturalization of political issues in Bradford was taking place before violence broke out. The Ouseley Report highlighted as its key concern the notion that cultural communities were fragmenting and relationships deteriorating along racial, ethnic and faith lines:

¹³³ Derek McGhee, "Moving to 'our' Common Ground - a Critical Examination of Community Cohesion Discourse in Twenty-First Century Britain," *The Sociological Review* 51, no. 3 (2003): 397.

¹³⁴ Ash Amin, "Unruly Strangers? The 2001 Urban Riots in Britain," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 2 (June 2003): 461.

¹³⁵ Danielle Demetriou, "Two Stabbed as Race Riot Flares in Bradford," *Telegraph*, 8 July, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1333219/Two-stabbed-as-race-riot-flares-in-Bradford.html> [Retrieved 8 July 2013]; Neil Darbyshire, "These Riots Are Not the Same as Brixton 20 Years Ago," *Telegraph*, 10 July, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/4263753/These-riots-are-not-the-same-as-Brixton-20-years-ago.html> [Retrieved 21 August 2013]; Jonathan Oliver, "Cash for Asians Is 'Cause of Race Riots,'" *Mail on Sunday*, 9 December, 2001, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-88882/Cash-Asians-cause-race-riots.html> [Retrieved 21 August 2013].

¹³⁶ Herman Ouseley, "Community Pride Not Prejudice - Making Diversity Work in Bradford" (Institute of Community Cohesion, 2001), <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocument.sFile.aspx?recordId=98&file=PDFversion> [Retrieved 20 October 2011].

Rather than seeing the emergence of a confident multi-cultural District, where people are respectful and have understanding and tolerance for differences, people's attitudes appear to be hardening and intolerance towards differences is growing. This situation is hindering people's understanding of each other and preventing positive contact between people from different cultural communities.¹³⁷

The Ouseley Report's concern with respect, understanding and tolerance of cultural difference gives an important insight into the ideological underpinnings of the community cohesion agenda. The BDRR team seized upon and emphasised culture to the detriment of other explanations, and this was mirrored in the later reports that specifically aimed to explain the uprisings.

The Cantle Report, *Community Cohesion: Report of the Independent Review Team*,¹³⁸ analysed the causes of the disturbances by comparing the conditions and relationships in those towns and cities affected with similar areas with large multicultural populations that had not experienced violent uprisings. Highlighting cross-community suspicion and distrust as the tinder box conditions for riot, the Cantle Report arrived at similar conclusions to the BDRR, arguing that the thing most lacking in those areas that had experienced violence was pride in the community and a positive approach to diversity.¹³⁹

Although the Cantle Report was nuanced in its understanding of the varied social conditions governing the lives of people in differing multicultural contexts

¹³⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁸ Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRC), *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team (chaired by Ted Cantle)* (London,: Home Office, 2001), <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/Default.aspx?recordId=96> [Retrieved 20 september 2011].

¹³⁹ Ibid., 15.

across the UK, its emphasis on segregated communities retreating into themselves at the expense of meaningful cross-cultural contact echoed the conclusions of the Ouseley Report. This understanding of life in the Northern towns and cities that experienced unrest as taking place in the context of 'parallel lives' was seized upon by the government and the media as the starting point for addressing the causes of the uprisings.¹⁴⁰

The Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion (chaired by John Denham) was convened to identify what help the government could offer to communities to begin addressing the problems manifested by the uprisings, and its conclusions followed a similar logic. The Denham Report, *Building Cohesive Communities*, aimed to identify the issues that had created the conditions for the disturbances, and, building on the work of Cantle and Ouseley, noted amongst its most important contributory factors the lack of a strong civic identity or shared social values and 'the fragmentation and polarisation of communities – on economic, geographical, racial and cultural lines - on a scale which amounts to segregation, *albeit to an extent by choice*.' (Emphasis added).¹⁴¹

The culturalization of the causal factors that led to the uprisings can be seen in the Reports' concentration on cross-community communication and values at the expense of other important causal factors. The two most important of these are arguably the deteriorated socio-economic conditions of the areas affected and the immediate racist contexts in which the disturbances took place. In emphasising community cohesion as the solution to the problems of the areas

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴¹ Home Office, *Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion* (London: Home Office, 2001), 11, <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocument.sFile.aspx?recordId=94&file=PDFversion> [Retrieved 11 October 2011].

affected, these contexts were de-emphasised and as a consequence the class and racial identities attendant to these were subordinated to a culturalized understanding of subjectivity which considered diverse cultures problematic unless contained by an overarching set of common (British) values. As the Cattle report put it:

It is easy to focus on systems, processes and institutions and to forget that community cohesion fundamentally depends on people and their values. Indeed, many of the present problems seem to owe a great deal to the failure to communicate and agree a set of clear values that can govern behaviour.¹⁴²

The community cohesion discourse, then, focused on preventing further outbreaks of violence by promoting understanding and communication between disparate communities and articulating a clear set of values to unite them. In 2002, the Local Government Association report, *Guidance on Community Cohesion*, defined a cohesive community as one where:

there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRC), *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team (chaired by Ted Cattle)*, 18.

¹⁴³ Local Government Association (LGA), *Guidance on Community Cohesion* (London: LGA Publications, 2002), 6,

Community cohesion became the central strand of the government's approach to preventing violent disorder and social unrest.

Taken together, the Reports and the community cohesion discourse that emerged worked to culturalize the problem of the uprisings, and through a focus on the cultural practices of problematic communities, Muslims came to be seen as particularly difficult to integrate and requiring of state intervention. Through casting the violence as resulting from ignorance, fear, suspicion and hostility amongst culturally defined communities who had little meaningful contact with one another, other essential contributory factors were overlooked. By presenting community cohesion as the solution, class and racial identities were de-emphasised and subordinated to an understanding that stressed cultural subjectivity. The following section demonstrates how this focus led to the accentuation of Muslim culture as particularly problematic.

Community cohesion discourse and the culturalization of social problems

By emphasizing culture as the single most important feature of the communities at the centre of the 2001 uprisings, community cohesion discourse played a fundamental role in the racialization of British Muslims in the early 21st century. From this discourse emerged a 'bad' Muslim subject who threatened British values and cohesive communities, and whose influence and power could be tempered by the vociferous articulation of those values that united the nation, as well state support of 'good' Muslim identifications.

This dual Muslim subject was produced through a culturalization of the uprisings, that later found support in the burgeoning community cohesion discourse and was used to explain social and political problems across the nation. By de-emphasising class, race and ethnic identities, Muslim culture was singled out as uniquely problematic and the uprisings were interpreted as symptomatic of a larger, nation-wide problem caused by excessive Muslim cultural diversity and the multicultural policies that were increasingly portrayed as having failed to articulate uniting values. The following section considers how media, popular and government discourse discounted socio-economic explanations for the uprisings by focusing on a cultural account of behaviour.

Culturalizing class

All three of the summer 2001 disturbances took place in economically deteriorated areas of multiple deprivation,¹⁴⁴ previously dominated by thriving textile industries, which had experienced dramatic decline. Although the material disadvantage that followed from deindustrialization impacted on all communities, inner city areas populated largely by Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent were particularly affected and working class Muslims suffered disproportionately from the deprivation that followed. In the case of Bradford, for

¹⁴⁴ Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, *The English Indices of Deprivation 2004: Summary (revised)* (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004), <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100410180038/http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/englishindices> [Retrieved 30 November 2013].

example, 53.2% of Pakistanis and 81.0% of Bangladeshi residents lived in multiple stress areas, compared to 19.5% of the general population.¹⁴⁵

As Ash Amin has noted, the collapse of industry in the areas affected had removed an important site of integration between these 'divided communities', which had met frequently in the labour market, but in a socio-economic climate of decline found fewer opportunities for contact.¹⁴⁶ Working class frustration, as a contributory factor to the disturbances, however, was racialized as these issues were enfolded into a discourse of blame.

Cultural explanations laid the socio-economic condition of working class Muslims at Islam's door, blaming low educational achievement on the time spent at mosques and praying, which was believed to lead Muslim children to neglect their homework, perform poorly in exams and thus perpetuate the problem of unemployment.¹⁴⁷ In this way, low educational attainment and high levels of unemployment were accounted for via a focus on culture.¹⁴⁸ This was taken to extremes by some. Neil Darbyshire, writing in *The Telegraph*, contrasted the acceptable socio-economic frustrations of the youth involved in the 1981 Brixton

¹⁴⁵ Ramindar Singh, "Future Race Relations in Bradford: Factors That Matter," 2001, [www.bradford2020.com/pride/docs/Section 8.doc](http://www.bradford2020.com/pride/docs/Section%208.doc) [Retrieved 22 August 2013].

¹⁴⁶ Amin, "Unruly Strangers? The 2001 Urban Riots in Britain," 461.

¹⁴⁷ Several analyses highlighted cultural factors as contributing to the relatively low educational achievement of Pakistani pupils in Bradford. Studies by Philip Lewis, advisor to the Anglican Bishop of Bradford, and Mohammed Ali, chief executive for Bradford charity Quest for Economic Development, pointed to extended stays in Pakistan as well as the hours children spent in Islamic education after schools and the different pedagogical tradition of rote learning as important factors in low attainment. Phillip Lewis, "Between Lord Ahmed and Ali G: Which Future for British Muslims," *Bradford Race Review: Supplementary Reports*, 2002, www.bradford2020.com/pride/docs/section6.doc [Retrieved 14 February 2014]; Warwick Mansell, "Anger at Attack on Muslim Education," *Times Educational Supplement*, 2 November, 2001, <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=354927> [Retrieved 22 August 2013]; Neil Tweedie, "Frightened Whites in Bradford's 'Two Worlds,'" *Telegraph*, 2 November, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1361206/Frightened-whites-in-Bradford-two-worlds.html> [Retrieved 21 August 2013].

¹⁴⁸ Amin, "Unruly Strangers? The 2001 Urban Riots in Britain," 461; Arun Kundnani et al., "Commentary: From Oldham to Bradford: The Violence of the Violated," *Race & Class* 43, no. 2 (2001): 106.

riots with the unacceptable participation in the 2001 Bradford riots, disregarding the specifically local economic conditions of the areas affected by claiming that the 2001 riots were 'set against a relatively healthy economy, low unemployment, low inflation and low interest rates'.¹⁴⁹ By discounting local conditions and uneven regional development, the frustrations of participants excluded by local circumstances from the benefits of a healthy national economy were allowed no claim to socio-economic marginalisation as an explanatory factor. Discourses of cultural blame were sustained through a deliberate de-emphasising of the working class identities of those involved in the uprisings.

Community cohesion discourse further subordinated class to culture in its emphasis on parallel lives and segregation as driven by values rather than socio-economic factors. Driven by the implicit understanding that divided, morally fragmented communities were characterised by structural economic deprivation and required government intervention to force change, community cohesion problematized only working class communities.¹⁵⁰ Working class Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent Muslims were those for whom community cohesion was considered necessary as an instrument of social control. The professional, middle class Egyptians of the Southeast of England, for instance, were not targeted with state intervention to ensure their integration. Similarly, as Deborah Phillips has noted, wealth-social exclusion was not a state concern, despite the fact that integration may be just as hampered by residential and social self-segregation along class lines, the epitome of which is the gated community.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Darbyshire, "These Riots Are Not the Same as Brixton 20 Years Ago."

¹⁵⁰ Jonathan Burnett, "Community, Cohesion and the State," *Race & Class* 45, no. 3 (2004): 8.

¹⁵¹ Deborah Phillips, "Parallel Lives? Challenging Discourses of British Muslim Self-segregation," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24, no. 1 (2006): 29. See also: Burnett, "Community, Cohesion and the State," 8; Virinder S. Kalra and Nisha Kapoor, "Interrogating

Class played an important part in how the riots, and the subsequent community cohesion discourse was constructed, but this was culturalized (and racialized) by the reports and particularly by the media. White participants in the violence were presented as being justifiably angry about perceived unfair government hand-outs to Asian communities. Contrastingly, young Asian Muslim participants were consistently aligned with criminality, drug dealing and gangs.¹⁵² The cultural racialization of the riots ensured that while working class whites were granted a socio-economic explanation for their anger, working class Muslims were assigned a cultural explanation for their socio-economic position.

The de-emphasis of race

An initial separation was made in the media between those white and Asian youths that participated in the uprisings. Where white perpetrators of violence were represented as exceptional extremists, Asian youths were considered representative of a generation of discontent. Yet, as the uprisings were increasingly portrayed as the violent expression of inherently dangerous alien culture, this 'Asian' subject was culturalized and de-racialized. As the conceptualisation of Muslims came to be shaped by the discourses emerging in the context of the September 11, 2001 attacks, Asian rioters were *a posteriori* cast within the terms of a good/bad dichotomy. As their identities shifted from 'Asian', to 'Muslim', participants were presented as trapped between the values of the (good) law abiding Asian community, rooted in tradition, and a new

Segregation, Integration and the Community Cohesion Agenda," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 9 (2009): 1404.

¹⁵² Alexander, "Imagining the Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Masculinity and Youth after 'the Riots.'"

generation of (bad) macho, masculine defiance fed by Muslim culture's tendencies towards isolation, segregation and violence.¹⁵³

A series of articles by Amit Roy in *The Telegraph* illustrates how Muslims were isolated as the root of unrest in Britain. Reporting on the response to the Oldham uprisings, Roy described Manchester's Asian community as growing increasingly uneasy with the term 'Asian', because it placed them 'in the same category as rioting Muslim youths of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin in nearby Oldham.'¹⁵⁴ Discussing the reaction of non-Muslim Asians to the Bradford riots, Roy reported local understandings of the violence, which emphasised the lack of control of Pakistani parents over their children, a culture of criminality and drug dealing, the radicalisation of Muslim youth over international issues like Kashmir, and the mosques; described as '... less religious centres, more like training grounds for the Taliban.'¹⁵⁵

Having isolated out of control Muslim youth as the instigators of violence, local non-Muslim Asians went on to dismiss the notion that the riots were reactions to socio-economic exclusion:

They talk of economic deprivation, complain of the police and discrimination, but these are excuses. When Indians came to Britain, they suffered from the same conditions. They had a level playing field. Because of our hard work, perseverance and keeping our youth under control,

¹⁵³ Burnett, "Community, Cohesion and the State," 6–7.

¹⁵⁴ Amit Roy, "Indians Try to Escape Catch-All 'Asian' Tag," *Telegraph*, 19 June, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1309153/Indians-try-to-escape-catch-all-Asian-tag.html> [Retrieved 21 August 2013].

¹⁵⁵ Hashmukh Shah, spokesman for the World Council of Hindus, quoted in Amit Roy, "Muslim Parents and Mosques Are to Blame, Says Hindu Leader," *Telegraph*, 9 July, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1333287/Muslim-parents-and-mosques-are-to-blame-says-Hindu-leader.html> [Retrieved 21 August 2013].

Indian children are leading in the field of education today. The responsibility for taking control of Pakistani youths lies with their parents and community leaders.¹⁵⁶

The need to dissociate Indians from 'Muslim violence' represents an example of what Krista Melanie Riley has identified as national capital accumulation.¹⁵⁷ By presenting all Asians as starting from the same deprived position, the explanation for Muslims' comparative lack of success was culturalized as resulting from feckless Pakistani parenting. Through associating with values of hard work and good parenting, Indians identified with the nation while dispelling and isolating Muslims as possessing culturally determined values that impeded their integration. These extracts illustrate how the category of Asian was split following the uprisings, in order that non-Muslims could align themselves with British values, while Muslims were further problematized as culturally dysfunctional.

The problematisation of transnational identities

One of the central concerns of the community cohesion agenda was to redefine and rearticulate an inclusive Britishness which would unite disparate communities across the nation. The focus on the need to speak English, the 'Britishness test' and concurrent tightening of immigration laws to make marriage to foreign spouses more difficult underlined a concern with the transnational loyalties of targeted communities.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Riley, "How to Accumulate National Capital: The Case of the 'Good' Muslim."

Marta Bolognani has traced the shifting focus of policy makers and the public with regard to culture in Bradford. Celebrated as the city's essence during its 2008 European capital of culture bid, this cultural diversity was nonetheless pathologised and proclaimed excessive through community cohesion discourse, which considered it responsible for the riots.¹⁵⁸ Central to this process was the problematisation of transnational identities which aimed to strengthen Britishness by diluting transnational attachments, particularly of Muslim communities.

The communities perceived to be most in need of civic re-education were never explicitly named, but the cultural practices thought to exemplify failed integration made clear that Muslims were the community that most lacked Britishness and required state intervention. The debate on the need to speak English, for example, focused on non-economically active Muslim mothers who disadvantaged their children educationally and contributed to intergenerational schizophrenia by not speaking English at home.¹⁵⁹ Attention was not merely restricted to first generation immigrant mothers, but also the language skills of those spouses from Pakistan and Bangladesh who married via transnational networks of clan and caste, and through which Muslims in Britain were perceived to be importing foreign cultures intent on remaining isolated.¹⁶⁰

The focus on intolerable cultural practices further emphasised that Muslims were the focus of community cohesion. Gender relations were articulated as one of the most important indicators of integration and were central to community cohesion discourse's articulation of the values which defined Britishness. Home

¹⁵⁸ Marta Bolognani, "Good Culture, Bad Culture...No Culture! The Implications of Culture in Urban Regeneration in Bradford, UK" 32, no. 4 (2012): 618–635.

¹⁵⁹ Liz Fekete, *Islamophobia and Civil Rights in Europe* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 2008), 46.

¹⁶⁰ Pnina Werbner, "Veiled Interventions in Pure Space: Honour, Shame and Embodied Struggles among Muslims in Britain and France," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (2007): 169–170.

Secretary David Blunkett, highlighting the publication of the government reports into the disturbances, spoke of the need to "...protect the rights and duties of all citizens, and confront practices and beliefs that hold them back, particularly women."¹⁶¹ The cultural practices held up as exemplifying non-British values were those associated with Muslim communities.¹⁶² Blunkett argued that British 'norms of acceptability' meant that practices of female genital mutilation and forced marriages could not be tolerated.¹⁶³ Michael Wills, minister responsible for defining Britishness in the context of the newly formed community cohesion discourse, similarly cited supposedly Islamic cultural practices to draw the line of tolerance: '...some things are absolutely clear. We don't accept forced marriages, genital mutilation or discrimination on any grounds.'¹⁶⁴

The enunciation of intolerable 'Islamic' cultural practices as the values against which British identity was articulated emphasised Muslim masculinities as deeply problematic. A gendered good/bad division emerged through community cohesion discourse, where Muslim women were portrayed as victims in need of state intervention and men's adherence to such practices became a litmus test of Britishness. As Blunkett stated in 2002:

¹⁶¹ David Bunkett, "Full Text of David Blunkett's Speech," *The Guardian*, 11 December, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/dec/11/immigrationpolicy.race> [Retrieved 6 November 2011].

¹⁶² These practices are not clearly not 'Islamic', in the sense that they are in any way sanctioned by religious authority or carried out by Muslim communities across the globe. They are more correctly associated with particular ethnic or national traditions. However, the point here is not that these associations were factually accurate, but that they were attached, in the public imagination, to Islam, and through the repetition of such problematic proximities, called up Muslims every time they were mentioned. Sara Ahmed, "Problematic Proximities: Or Why Critiques of Gay Imperialism Matter," *Feminist Legal Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 119–132.

¹⁶³ BBC, "Immigrants 'Should Try to Feel British,'" 9 December, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1699847.stm [Retrieved 23 August 2013].

¹⁶⁴ Rachel Sylvester, "Getting to Grips with the National Identity Crisis," *Telegraph*, 15 December, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1365383/Getting-to-grips-with-the-national-identity-crisis.html> [Retrieved 21 August 2013].

Respect for cultural difference has limits, marked out by fundamental human rights and duties. Some of these boundaries are very clear, such as in the examples of forced marriage or female circumcision (more accurately described as female genital mutilation, for that is what it is). These practices are clearly incompatible with our basic values.¹⁶⁵

It should be noted that these unacceptable practices were already illegal at this time, and thus were not 'accepted'. The oppressive patriarchy of Muslim culture had, however, taken on a larger significance. Intertwined with discourses surrounding the invasion of Afghanistan, which relied heavily on the rescuing of Muslim women from the tyranny of the Taliban, the community cohesion's reliance on this dichotomy of good oppressed women and bad patriarchal men, and the necessity of state intervention to correct it, found a great deal of support.

Emerging in the context of home office reports into the riots, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that these community cohesion measures were primarily aimed at Britain's Muslim communities. David Blunkett's announcement of a test of national allegiance while discussing the uprisings served to link domestic civil disorder with excesses of cultural diversity and transnational attachments.¹⁶⁶ Blunkett emphasised that lack of English language skills were not the cause of 2001 riots, but nevertheless pathologised those who did not speak English at home, claiming that fluency helped 'overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships.'¹⁶⁷ Legislation which

¹⁶⁵ David Blunkett, "What Does Citizenship Mean Today?," *The Guardian*, 15 December, 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/15/race.thinktanks> [Retrieved 23 August 2013].

¹⁶⁶ Tahir Abbas, "After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, no. 3 (2004): 30–31.

¹⁶⁷ Blunkett, "What Does Citizenship Mean Today?"

tightened immigration controls and impeded family reunification, announced in the context of press conferences about the riots, further emphasised the conviction that foreign spouses and imported cultures were thought to endanger British social cohesion.¹⁶⁸

The debate engendered by the Northern uprisings led to an attempt to reaffirm the values that bound the national community. Multiculturalism, with its celebration of diversity, was problematized as creating segregated communities and failing to provide a unifying social vision and community cohesion aimed to repair this damage through an explicit celebration of Britishness. Yet the culturalization of communities and their problems helped to give this discourse a decidedly anti-Muslim spin. Through the de-emphasis of class and race, and the emphasis on problematic transnational attachments, a bad Muslim subject was produced, detached from other salient identifications, pathologised as culturally dysfunctional and held up as marking the limits of British tolerance.

At the same time as community cohesion discourse was carving out this bad Muslim subject as responsible for domestic unrest and social strife, a global discourse was emerging which held Muslims responsible for violence and tyranny on an international scale. As noted above it is impossible to artificially separate the anti-Muslim elements of community cohesion from the pernicious influence of the 'war on terror' and the counterterrorism discourse which was being formulated and articulated simultaneously. The following section considers how the representation of Muslims in counterterrorism discourse contributed to the construction of the 'bad Muslim'.

¹⁶⁸ Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, and Eleonore Kofman, "Secure Borders and Safe Haven and the Gendered Politics of Belonging: Beyond Social Cohesion," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 3 (2005): 518–519.

British counterterrorism discourse

While community cohesion discourse culturalized politics to produce a bad Muslim subject against which British identity could be articulated, counterterrorism discourse performed a similar function by constructing an 'Islamic terrorist' enemy as a foreign threat that endangered the integrity and existence of the nation. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, this discourse of foreign threat was employed relatively un-problematically. Britain was portrayed by Prime Minister Tony Blair as one of the US's staunchest allies, sharing in its mourning and loss, and committed to freedom, increasingly represented as the central value for which the 'war on terror' would be waged. By committing troops to campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, Britain became intimately involved with the military aspect of the 'war on terror,' and the discourse employed to justify this involvement made liberal use of binary logic. British counterterrorism discourse focused on the need to dissociate 'good' patriotic British Muslims from their 'bad' foreign co-religionists.

The 'home-grown' nature of the 7 July, 2005 London transport bombings and the foiled plots a week later, however, dislocated this construction. Following July 2005, the domestication of the foreign threat led to renewed government focus on 'bad' British Muslims and an emphasis on the promotion of a British Islam that would provide a robust counter-narrative to jihadist doctrine. The following section considers the employment of the good/bad Muslim binary in the 'war on terror' discourse, before moving on to consider how British counterterrorism discourse responded to the July 2005 attacks through the Prevent strategy.

The September 11, 2001 attacks and the discourse of the 'war on terror'

It has been noted that the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon created a 'void of meaning', which was swiftly filled by a particular construction of what the terrorist attacks meant; for the US and for the world.¹⁶⁹ President George W. Bush sought, in numerous speeches, to draw the 'civilised world' in to America's pain by representing September 11, 2001 as more than localised strikes on the United States, but as attacks on freedom itself and thus a global tragedy and the concern of every 'freedom loving nation'.¹⁷⁰ Splitting the entire global system into a moral order in which a choice between good and evil must be made, Bush stated: 'Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.'¹⁷¹ In formulating the 'war on terror' discourse, he employed the central us/them binary to represent the attacks and those responsible. The us/them categorisation, and the signifiers attached to each side of the binary, operates as a standard relational pair; using one always invokes the other,¹⁷² and repetition of this binary conditioned both the response to the hijackings and the identities of actors in the global terrain carved out by the 'war on terror' discourse.

Binarism is a useful rhetorical device for leaders because of its simplification of complex issues into an easily identifiable cast of heroes and villains, which may

¹⁶⁹ Dirk Nabers, "Filling the Void of Meaning: Identity Construction in U.S. Foreign Policy After September 11, 2001," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5, no. 2 (2009): 191–214.

¹⁷⁰ George W. Bush, "Text of Bush's Act of War Statement," *BBC*, 12 September, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1540544.stm> [Retrieved 7 January 2014].

¹⁷¹ George W. Bush, "Transcript of President Bush's Address," *CNN*, 21 September 2001, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> [Retrieved 2 December 2013].

¹⁷² Ivan Leudar, Victoria Marsland, and Jirí Nekvapil, "On Membership Categorization: 'Us', 'Them' and 'Doing Violence' in Political Discourse," *Discourse & Society* 15, no. 2–3 (2004): 245.

be faithfully echoed by mass media.¹⁷³ President Bush's early speeches after the attacks served to equate the US with positive attributes such as freedom, compassion and tolerance, in order to reassure the nation that it was good.¹⁷⁴ In American discourse, the religious framing of the 'war on terror' was demonstrated not only in the (swiftly discarded) terminology of 'crusade',¹⁷⁵ but also in Bush's regular formulation of the attacks as 'evil'.¹⁷⁶ Michael Blain has conceptualised this language as part of a global victimage ritual, where political events were constructed as ultimate battles of good against evil, demanding that actors take sides in an apocalyptic drama where the heroic subjects of positive power took on the villainous subjects of negative power.¹⁷⁷ Signifiers such as 'evil' had the dual effect of representing the enemy as outside the moral order while at the same time representing America and its allies as virtuous, innocent and godly, and tapped in to a deeply resonant religious frame that served to link Islam with each signifier on the 'bad' side of the us/them divide.

The construction of the 'war on terror' as a battle between good and evil has been described by Ivie and Giner as Bush's 'rhetorical demonology',¹⁷⁸ and the religious connotations of this construction, as Andrew Bacevich and Elizabeth Prodromov have observed, served as an instrument to provide moral justification for a strategy of empire, providing an immediately available cultural frame to

¹⁷³ Kevin Coe et al., "No Shades of Gray: The Binary Discourse of George W. Bush and an Echoing Press," *Journal of Communication* no. June (2004): 234–235.

¹⁷⁴ Paul T. McCartney, "American Nationalism and U.S. Foreign Policy From September 11 to the Iraq War," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 3 (2004): 408.

¹⁷⁵ On 16 September 2001, in an unscripted comment, Bush stated: 'This crusade, this war on terrorism is gonna take a while'. Manuel Perez-Rivas, "Bush Vows to Rid the World of 'Evil-Doers,'" *CNN*, 16 September, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/16/gen.bush.terrorism/> [Retrieved 7 January 2014].

¹⁷⁶ Bush, 12 September 2001, quoted in Andrew J. Bacevich and Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "God Is Not Neutral: Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy after 9/11," *Orbis* 48, no. 1 (2004): 48.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Blain, "Sovereignty, Bio-Power, and the Global War on Terrorism," *Discourse of Sociological Practice* 8, no. 2 (2009): 41–42.

¹⁷⁸ Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner, "Hunting the Devil: Democracy's Rhetorical Impulse to War," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2007): 585.

make sense of the attacks.¹⁷⁹ Despite constant assurances that the 'war on terror' was not religious war ('we do not fight Islam, we fight evil'¹⁸⁰), the invocation of Christian metaphor and terminology contrived to give the opposite impression. As a culturally powerful and instantly recognisable narrative, the rhetoric of good/evil summoned earlier American victories over ideological 'evil' such as the Second World War and the Cold War.

The fact that the attacks were justified in religious language as Islamic attacks by Osama bin Laden,¹⁸¹ and that this was mirrored and echoed by Bush's rhetoric of militant evangelism, meant that from the outset there was a religious dimension to the attacks (and thus the subsequent 'war on terror') that simply could not be denied. The perpetrators of the attacks were Muslim, a fact constantly asserted by bin Laden in his communications. Therefore, it followed that the enemy was Muslim. The enemy was also 'evil', 'terrorists', 'uncivilised', 'barbaric', etc. Once such a binary has been instituted invocation of any of its terms evokes the whole range of subject positions and characteristics attached to it.¹⁸² By this logic, each description of the enemy conjured up all aspects of his identity, and one central aspect was Islam. It is for this reason that the good/bad Muslim dichotomy became central to the 'war on terror' and the British counterterrorism discourse.

¹⁷⁹ Bacevich and Prodromou, "God Is Not Neutral: Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy after 9/11," 43–47.

¹⁸⁰ Bush 6 November 2001 quoted Aditi Bhatia, "Religious Metaphor in the Discourse of Illusion: George W. Bush and Osama Bin Laden," *World Englishes* 26, no. 4 (2007): 513.

¹⁸¹ Bhatia, "Religious Metaphor in the Discourse of Illusion: George W. Bush and Osama Bin Laden."

¹⁸² Coe et al., "No Shades of Gray: The Binary Discourse of George W. Bush and an Echoing Press," 247. See also: Annita Lazar and Michelle M. Lazar, "The Discourse of the New World Order: 'Out-Casting' the Double Face of Threat," *Discourse & Society* 15, no. 2 (2004): 227–229.

Leaders were careful to qualify any reference to Islam in the context of the 'war on terror' with disclaimers that emphasised that the *majority* of Muslims were peaceful and the fight was not with Islam.¹⁸³ This was based partly on the need to dissociate the terrorists' actions from religion in order to de-legitimise bin Laden's pronouncements of a holy war, as well as the very real need to reassure Western Muslims and maintain civil peace by not appearing to give rhetorical support to possible retaliations. Bush and Blair therefore divided the category 'Muslim' into 'good Muslims', whose faith they respected, and 'bad Muslims', who were traitors, blasphemers, and hijackers of Islam. Bin Laden's claim to be acting in the name of Islam was thus de-legitimised by assertions that his interpretation of Islamic justification for his actions was misguided, cynical, or 'evil'. However, the good/bad divide served further functions. Through proclamations that Islam was really peaceful and good, speakers demonstrated their own broadmindedness and tolerance, their knowledge of Islam, and, in speaking for their country, their nation's place on the righteous side of the us/them binary.

British counterterrorism discourse

Prime Minister Tony Blair sought to stake Britain's place on the virtuous side of the conflict from a very early point. Parliament was recalled on 14 September

¹⁸³ 'I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith... Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends.' Bush, "Transcript of President Bush's Address."; 'We do not act against Islam. The true followers of Islam are our brothers and sisters in this struggle.' Tony Blair speaking on 2 October 2001, quoted in Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 402.

2001, and Britain was entreated to see itself as sharing in the pain and grief caused by the attacks:

I thought it particularly important [to recall Parliament] in view of the fact that these attacks were not just attacks upon people and buildings; nor even merely upon the USA; these were attacks on the basic democratic values in which we all believe so passionately and on the civilised world.¹⁸⁴

Blair drew Britain in to America's pain (and its subsequent fight) by insisting that the civilised world and democratic values had been attacked. The implication was obvious: Britain was part of the in-group - the civilised world – and should thus consider its own values brutally assailed and itself a direct victim of the attacks.

The September 11 attacks required an explanation of both the identity and demands of the perpetrators and a reaffirmation of national ideals to reassure the public that order would be restored. For this reason Krebs and Lobasz have argued that the rhetoric of crisis is the rhetoric of identity; working to render the crisis knowable and surmountable by invoking the community's shared values and affirming the elements that bind it.¹⁸⁵ Blair's rhetoric to this effect was not as overtly religious as Bush's and was notable for its attempts to move away from the discourse of evil. The religious discourse employed by Bush had relatively little purchase in a religiously ambivalent 'Christian Britain', meaning that Blair could not capitalise on this powerful rhetorical mode to the same extent. His

¹⁸⁴ Tony Blair, "Full Text of Blair's Speech to the Commons," *The Guardian*, 14 September, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/sep/14/houseofcommons.uk1> [Retrieved 8 December 2013]. Blair made several references in this speech to the civilised/barbaric binary through the invocation of one of its terms, for example: 'By their acts, these terrorists and those behind them have made themselves the enemies of the civilised world.'; '...this barbarism that is totally foreign to the true spirit and teachings of Islam.'; 'Our beliefs are the very opposite of the fanatics. We believe in reason, democracy and tolerance. These beliefs are the foundation of our civilised world.'

¹⁸⁵ Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer K. Lobasz, "Fixing the Meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion, and the Road to War in Iraq," *Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (2007): 433.

discourse instead concentrated on a civilisational rather than a religious dichotomy, and this was readily echoed by other MPs in the Commons debate on 14 September 2001, as well as the media. Yet, despite Blair's attempts to distance himself from the good/evil binary, the dominant construction of the September 11 attacks meant that the articulation of any one of the relational pairs that formed the discourse effectively invoked the whole binary. In the British context, this necessitated the institution of the good/bad Muslim binary.

Good/bad Muslims in British counterterrorism discourse

Tony Blair made an early distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims. In his speech to the Commons, three days after the September 11 attacks, Blair stated:

We do not yet know the exact origin of this evil. But, if, as appears likely, it is so-called Islamic fundamentalists, we know they do not speak or act for the vast majority of decent law-abiding Muslims throughout the world. I say to our Arab and Muslim friends: neither you nor Islam is responsible for this; on the contrary, we know you share our shock at this terrorism; and we ask you as friends to make common cause with us in defeating this barbarism that is totally *foreign* to the true spirit and teachings of Islam. [Emphasis added].¹⁸⁶

Blair divided the category of Muslims into those evil, barbaric, terrorist Islamic fundamentalists who had been responsible on one side, and the vast majority of decent, law-abiding, shocked 'friends' on the other. More tellingly, he placed those in the former category on the 'foreign' side of the inside/outside binary.

¹⁸⁶ Blair, "Full Text of Blair's Speech to the Commons."

Several MPs were similarly keen to stress that they did not hold Muslims *en masse* responsible for the attacks:

...the people in the Muslim community in Bristol, East have been just as appalled as anyone else. They feel their Britishness just as strongly as many of us and they have been horrified at what has happened. [Jean Corston, Bristol, East].¹⁸⁷

...the Muslims communities – those who believe in the Koran – in our country are settled, integrated and positively horrified by what they have seen on television. [Stuart Bell, Middlesbrough].¹⁸⁸

The un-Islamic nature of the attacks was emphasised in contrast with the beliefs and values of those who truly follow Islam, but it was the Britishness of good Muslims that was most forcefully stressed.

This emphasis on settled, integrated British Muslims who were 'like us', may appear contradictory to community cohesion discourse's emphasis on Muslims' segregated, parallel and un-British lives. Yet despite this apparent reformulation of community cohesion discourse, there was continuity in the need to establish and nurture a particularly British Islam. By stressing British Muslims' horror at the attacks, counterterrorism discourse reformulated the good/bad binary around (good) British and (bad) foreign Muslims. Although the September 11 attacks were represented as an assault on civilisation, the danger was exteriorised as foreign. Good Muslims were 'our' Muslims, and the challenge lay in the need to

¹⁸⁷ House of Commons, "Hansard Debate 14 September 2001," 2001, col. 646, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo010914/debtext/10914-01.htm> [Retrieved 10 December 2013].

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 657.

distinguish between those good, law abiding Muslims who must be protected and bad foreign Muslims who were potentially preparing terrorist attacks.

The counterterrorism discourse that emerged following the 2005 London bombings, however, dislocated this understanding of terrorism, and both intensified and focused the good/bad Muslim divide. The bombers were British and apparently integrated, dispersing the stable construction of 'Islamic terrorism' as a largely foreign threat. The 'goodness' of British Muslims could no longer be assumed, rather, it had to be tirelessly promoted through state intervention in Islamic practice itself. The Prevent portion of the CONTEST counterterrorism strategy represented the government's attempt to support and promote a British Islam that would counter extremism and radicalism in Muslim communities, yet it was predicated on the articulation of Britishness as a remedy for terrorism and the notion that Muslims were dangerous, suspicious, and particularly susceptible to violent extremism.

The London Bombings and good/bad Muslims in the Prevent strategy

The London bombings of 7 July 2005, and the attempted bombings two weeks later, dislocated the hitherto stable construction of terrorism as an exterior threat to Britain. The Britishness of the bombers that lent a new focus to the good/bad Muslim discourse, and the realisation that 'home-grown' terrorism required a circle of tacit support led to a greater emphasis on the domestication of a threat that had previously been represented as largely foreign. This increased

government focus on prevention strategies and the necessity of disrupting sympathy for the objectives and motives of terrorism.¹⁸⁹

The central policy consequence of the July 2005 attacks was renewed focus on the Prevent element of the CONTEST antiterrorism framework. Created in 2003 and made public in 2006, CONTEST was based on four broad strands: pursuing terrorists and those who sponsored them; preventing terrorism by tackling radicalisation; protecting the public, key national services and UK interests overseas; and preparing for the consequences of terrorist attacks.¹⁹⁰ In April 2005 the government was criticised by the Home Affairs select committee for emphasising other parts of CONTEST at the expense of prevention, and the London bombings led to renewed focus on community based approaches to prevent radicalisation.

Prevent represented an attempt to win the 'hearts and minds' of Muslims in the UK who might be susceptible to violent extremism. Focusing on the challenging of extremist ideology and state funding for the voices of 'moderate Islam',¹⁹¹ it came to form the central pillar of state engagement with Muslim communities. What is important about the renewed focus on Prevent for the purpose of this chapter is the way in which this strategy internalised and reproduced the good/bad Muslim divide. Through a monocultural focus on Muslims only, the linking of funding to certain accepted ideas, social engineering of Muslim organisations and leaders to align them with state sanctioned doctrinal stances, and the targeting of particular Muslim communities (chiefly Salafis and

¹⁸⁹ Shamit Saggar, "Boomerangs and Slingshots: Radical Islamism and Counter-Terrorism Strategy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 382.

¹⁹⁰ Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi, and Hannah Lownsbrough, *Bringing It Home: Community-Based Approaches to Counter-Terrorism* (London, Demos, 2007), 24.

¹⁹¹ David Stevens, "Reasons to Be Fearful, One, Two, Three: The 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Agenda," *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 13, no. 2 (2011): 165.

Islamists) as especially susceptible to violent extremism, Prevent internalised the good/bad Muslim binary as an integral part of policy.

Prevent

The announcement of the Prevent programme in October 2006 created the impression that it was simply a response to the July 2005 attacks. However, as Paul Thomas has noted, the key elements of the strategy had been mapped long before, in response to the September 11 attacks, the Northern uprisings of summer 2001 and intelligence that indicated British men were present in jihadist training camps in Afghanistan.¹⁹²

The first manifestation of this approach emerged from the Preventing Extremism Together taskforce in August 2005, which consisted of ministerial visits to areas with large Muslim populations and discussions with more than 1000 Muslims.¹⁹³ Building on the recommendations of the taskforce, a limited scheme, the Preventing Violent Extremism pathfinder fund, was introduced in October 2006 with a £6 million budget for priority local authorities (with Muslim populations greater than 5 percent). In June 2008 Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) was rolled out nationally as the largest domestic funding strand under Prevent with a budget of £45 million.¹⁹⁴ The revised Prevent strategy had the

¹⁹² Paul Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme," *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2010): 443.

¹⁹³ Rachel Briggs, "Community Engagement for Counterterrorism: Lessons from the United Kingdom," *International Affairs* 86, no. 4 (2010): 971.

¹⁹⁴ Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, announced this figure in October 2007, stating that the level of funding and the number of authorities in receipt of it would continue to grow. HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, 2008, 49, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Prevent_Strategy.pdf [Retrieved 3 January 2014].

overall aim of stopping people becoming violent extremists or supporting terrorism, and was comprised of five core strands: to challenge violent extremist ideology and support mainstream voices; to disrupt those who promoted violent extremism and support the institutions where they were active; to support individuals who were being targeted and recruited to violent extremism; to increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and to address grievances being exploited by ideologues; to develop understanding, analysis and evaluation; and strategic communications.¹⁹⁵ Prevent aimed to tackle support for violent extremism at the local level through the funding of mosques, Muslim community organisations and initiatives, youth groups, forums against extremism, anti-extremism road shows and the training of imams.¹⁹⁶

From its inception, Prevent focused solely on Muslims as particularly susceptible to violent extremism. The government's 2008 *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England* based local funding on the size of Muslim communities.¹⁹⁷ Paul Thomas has argued that the linking of funding with significant Muslim populations was based on the unsubstantiated belief that dense Muslim communities were more likely to breed terrorism.¹⁹⁸ This monocultural focus on Muslims within Prevent served to suggest that only 'Islamic extremism' was dangerous in a national security context, and since funding was linked to an explicitly antiterrorism agenda this had blanket connotations for the entire faith community, implying that all British Muslim

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹⁶ David Stevens, "In Extremis: A Self-Defeating Element in the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Strategy," *The Political Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2009): 517.

¹⁹⁷ 'In order to build resilience in those communities where it is most needed, the distribution of funding has been based on the size of local Muslim communities' HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, 49.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme," 444–446.

communities potentially had a problem with terrorism and must therefore be held to higher standards than other Britons and closely watched by their local authorities.

These aspects of Prevent would seem to suggest that all Muslims in Britain were considered (potentially) 'bad'. However, a closer analysis of the strategy reveals the implementation of binarism through the linking of Prevent funding to particular doctrinal understandings of Islam. By sponsoring 'moderate' organisations in order to create a dominant leadership which would contest radical expressions, the government targeted funding towards the influencing of religious ideas and practice, and in this way explicitly subsidised 'good' Muslims, while withdrawing funding for and engagement with 'bad' Muslims.¹⁹⁹

The implementation of the good/bad Muslim divide in the Prevent strategy

Yaya Birt has argued that following the foiled airline bombing plots of August 2006 British government strategy moved overtly towards a values-based approach to preventing violent extremism. Based on the understanding that violent Islamist terrorism was best understood as gross theological error, this approach held that ideological contestation, theological counter-narrative, and the formation of a moderate, modern and progressive British Islam represented the best way to tackle terrorism.²⁰⁰

Through the funding and promotion of certain organisations as the voice of moderation, the Prevent strategy implemented the good/bad Muslim divide based

¹⁹⁹ Stevens, "Reasons to Be Fearful, One, Two, Three: The 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Agenda," 168.

²⁰⁰ Yahya Birt, "Promoting Virulent Envy?," *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 4 (2009): 53.

on the values of organisations rather than their effectiveness in reaching 'at risk' individuals. Government funding was targeted towards organisations that were considered to have a robust approach towards tackling extremism, such as the Quilliam Foundation, which received more than £1 million, the Radical Middle Way (£400,000) and the Sufi Muslim Council (£200,000).²⁰¹ At the same time as promoting 'good' Muslim organisations and initiatives, the government announced its intention to retract funding and support from organisations whose values did not meet its expectations. This change of direction was underlined by the withdrawal of government engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain, which was not considered to have a sufficiently anti-extremist position, as well as the proscription of avowedly non-violent Islamist groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir.²⁰²

In October 2006 Ruth Kelly, then Communities Secretary, announced that Muslim organisations that refused to defend core British values and failed to take a pro-active role in the fight against extremism would lose access to funding. Highlighting that grants would be targeted towards those organisations that accepted and promoted 'non-negotiable values', Kelly stated: 'It is only by defending our values that we will prevent extremists radicalising future generations of terrorists'.²⁰³ *The Prevent Strategy* outlined what was expected of funded organisations, including the defence and upholding of shared values (respect for law, freedom of speech, equality of opportunity), and:

²⁰¹ Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme," 447.

²⁰² Fahad Ansari, "British Anti-Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-Hunt," *Islamic Human Rights Commission* (London: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2005), 21, <http://www.ihr.org.uk/file/2005BritishAntiTerrorism.pdf> [Retrieved 30 December 2010].

²⁰³ Toby Helm, "Back British Values or Lose Grants, Kelly Tells Muslim Groups," *Telegraph*, 12 October, 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1531226/Back-British-values-or-lose-grants-Kelly-tells-Muslim-groups.html> [Retrieved 5 January 2015].

The organisation actively condemns and works to tackle violent extremism. Factors to consider as part of this criterion include whether the organisation: publicly rejects and condemns violent extremism and terrorist acts, clearly and consistently; can show evidence of steps taken to tackle violent extremism and support for violent extremism; can point to preventing violent extremism events it has supported, spoken at or attended; can show that its actions are consistent with its public statements; and can show that its affiliated members or groups to which it is affiliated meet these criteria.²⁰⁴

Such an over-emphasis on an organisation's values indicates that the Prevent strategy was concerned with shaping the practice of British Islam, rather than working with those organisations that were more likely to be effective in reaching individuals who were at risk of radicalisation. Linking funding to values meant that organisations which potentially had the most credibility with such individuals would be side-lined by Prevent. Similarly, the likelihood of those individuals committed to violent Islamism attending government-backed roadshows and anti-extremism conferences is questionable. As one member of a prominent Muslim grassroots organisation, interviewed by Suraj Lakhani, stated: '...you wouldn't get Germaine Lindsay [one of the 7 July 2005 bombers] going to a [Prevent] community day...'²⁰⁵ Through concentrating on the values of an organisation, Prevent may have misdirected resources and effort away from those groups who shared an interest in preventing violent

²⁰⁴ HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, 60.

²⁰⁵ Suraj Lakhani, "Preventing Violent Extremism: Perceptions of Policy from Grassroots and Communities," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 51, no. 2 (2012): 195.

extremism, yet did not necessarily share the values demanded by Government.

David Stevens has highlighted that Prevent's tactic of attempting to reduce the influence of radical Islam by funding 'moderate' organisations was based on an overinflated perception of the importance of Islamic doctrine in motivating terrorist acts.²⁰⁶ Stevens' study has problematized the assumption, underpinning Prevent's values based strategy, that ideological factors represented the prime motivation driving individuals to join radical groups. He emphasised that spiritual or religious principles are rarely the primary incentives for those who join such groups. Rather, complex cost/benefit calculations about the goods provided by the group are undertaken by individuals, which focus on social benefits such as group solidarity, and have higher value than theological principles.²⁰⁷

This values-based approach to engagement with British Muslim organisations represents, according to Basia Spalek and Robert Lambert, a form of identity building, where 'moderates' were seen to be allies in the prevention of terrorism while those who did not meet the stringent conditions set by the Government in terms of values were viewed as a threat to social cohesion and national security.²⁰⁸ The good/bad divide as implemented in the Prevent agenda viewed legitimate Muslims as those who engaged with the government on its own terms, while those who refused such an engagement, irrespective of their motives, were perceived as radical, not sufficiently 'anti-extremist', and thus a potential terrorist

²⁰⁶ Stevens, "Reasons to Be Fearful, One, Two, Three: The 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Agenda," 184.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 169–171.

²⁰⁸ Basia Spalek and Robert Lambert, "Muslim Communities, Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation: A Critically Reflective Approach to Engagement," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 36, no. 4 (2008): 261.

threat.²⁰⁹ This had implications for recipients of Prevent funding, many of whom were uncomfortable with its overt anti-terrorism focus and feared that it could cause backlash within Muslim communities and undermine local solidarity.²¹⁰ This was similarly reflected in Lakhani's interviews with Muslim grassroots groups, who were concerned that Prevent funded projects were viewed with suspicion by mass society and served to strengthen assumptions that Islam and terrorism were intimately associated. As one respondent noted:

... when the government gives money to other community organisations to open up the youth centre... nobody bats an eyelid... [but] if the money came from Prevent and the youth centre is geared for Muslims then all of a sudden it has different connotations.²¹¹

Lakhani's data further suggests that Prevent project leaders were viewed with suspicion *within* their communities as government puppets and spies. Around half of respondents admitted they either regretted receiving Prevent funding, subsequently refused it, or attempted to conceal acceptance from their communities, and several were concerned that the negative connotations of the strategy would damage their credibility.²¹² Such studies suggest that Prevent's overt attempt to encourage 'good' and disengage from 'bad' Muslims actually had the effect of fracturing Muslim communities, intensifying the view of wider society that Islam was intractably connected with terrorism and increasing suspicion and distrust within those communities that Prevent's work was most needed.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 262.

²¹⁰ Birt, "Promoting Virulent Envy?," 55.

²¹¹ Lakhani, "Preventing Violent Extremism: Perceptions of Policy from Grassroots and Communities," 197–198.

²¹² Ibid., 198.

There is ample evidence that Prevent created real divisions within Muslim communities,²¹³ as well as between Muslim communities and others, including: non-Muslim ethnic and faith groups who resented the monocultural focus of funding;²¹⁴ local authorities, who were increasingly viewed with suspicion as colluding with the police and security service in the surveillance of their Muslim communities;²¹⁵ and wider society, for whom Prevent funding intensified the connection between Islam and terrorism.²¹⁶ Its work with *only* Muslims gave the impression that religious identification was the only identification and experience for Muslims,²¹⁷ and its concentration on promoting a convivial British Islam that would challenge extremist narratives implied that British Muslims had hitherto failed to understand their faith or had been practising it incorrectly. Overall, by treating Muslims in Britain as a generalised 'suspect community', Prevent entrenched the good/bad divide that had been instituted by both community cohesion and counterterrorism discourse and approached all Muslims as potentially 'bad'.

Conclusion: Good/bad Muslims and British national identity

Since 2001, identity in Britain has become a central concept. The dominant discourses of community cohesion and counterterrorism were pivotal in the construction of British Muslim identity. By focusing almost exclusively on Muslims,

²¹³ Lakhani, "Preventing Violent Extremism: Perceptions of Policy from Grassroots and Communities"; Spalek and Lambert, "Muslim Communities, Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation: A Critically Reflective Approach to Engagement," 266–267.

²¹⁴ Birt, "Promoting Virulent Envy?"

²¹⁵ Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme," 448–450.

²¹⁶ Lakhani, "Preventing Violent Extremism: Perceptions of Policy from Grassroots and Communities," 198.

²¹⁷ Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme," 453.

these discourses subordinated other identifications to religious identity and projected a state-sanctioned 'correct' way to be Muslim in Britain.

This chapter has demonstrated how dominant national discourses consistently singled Muslims out as dangerous and threatening. Yet, as the analysis has shown, Muslims as the community to be targeted were rarely, if ever, named, with speakers relying on cultural practices and common-sense understandings which implicitly referred to Muslims without ever explicitly singling them out. There are at least two reasons for this. First, racialized discourses in liberal democratic societies are bound by convention to not appear to target a particular racial, ethnic or cultural group.²¹⁸ There are strong social injunctions that govern the way in which people, and particularly elites such as ministers and the media, speak about minority groups. Thus even when Muslims were clearly the community being targeted, linguistic strategies such as hedging, disclaimers and diminutives were used by speakers to make clear that they didn't consider *all* Muslims to be dangerous. These strategies served to present a positive self-image of speakers as broad-minded, whilst at the same time deflecting accusations of the illegitimate targeting of Muslims. Second, the simple self-evident fact that the vast majority of British Muslims were not engaged in anti-social activity or terrorism meant that the targeting of Muslims as a group was obviously illegitimate. Sweeping powers which primarily targeted Muslims could therefore not be justified under a discourse that overtly constructed them all as dangerously other, since most Muslims were clearly peaceful British citizens. This tension between the need to single out Muslims as a problematic group and the

²¹⁸ van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism*, 71–74; M. Augoustinos and D. Every, "The Language of race and Prejudice: A Discourse of Denial, Reason, and Liberal-Practical Politics," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 26, no. 2 (2007): 129–132.

necessity to avoid charges of Islamophobia goes some way to explaining the omnipresence of the good/bad Muslim binary in post-2001 British discourse.

The good/bad dichotomy that was central to both community cohesion and counterterrorism discourse was crucial to the development of British Islamophobia. 'Good' Muslims were represented as those who could be drawn in to the national community, while 'bad' Muslims were to be isolated and delegitimized. Yet, despite their focus on Muslims, these discourses were simultaneously instrumental in bolstering British national identity.

The discursive work of national identity lies in its need to mark difference in order to demarcate an area of belonging. As an imagined community, the nation sustains itself by consistently representing 'others' who affirm the nation by existing as something the community is not. As David Campbell has argued, these 'others' are integral to the construction of national identity, and are usually represented as dangerous to the integrity of the national community.²¹⁹ National identity by necessity induces a dichotomous discourse, whereby the recognition of those who belong to the nation is predicated on the construction of those who do not.²²⁰

British discourse since 2001 has engaged national identity in a way that is predicated on the representation of Muslims as the nation's 'significant others'. As Anna Triandafyllidou has argued, significant national others can be internal or external; while the former threaten the unity and authenticity of a nation, the latter threaten to wipe it out.²²¹ Community cohesion discourse worked to

²¹⁹ David Campbell, *Writing Security* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1992), 3.

²²⁰ Anna Triandafyllidou, "National Identity and the 'Other,'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 4 (1998): 597.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 602–603.

represent Muslims as this internal significant other, a community inside the national community whose excessive cultural diversity was deemed threatening. 'Self-segregation' and 'parallel lives' were the watchwords, and served to represent Muslims as withdrawing from the nation in a way that increased suspicion and mistrust amongst communities, and had the potential to cause rioting and violence on the streets. The fact that a remedial programme of civic education in British values was posited as the antidote to urban unrest indicates the centrality of national identity discourse to the community cohesion agenda. By forcefully articulating Britishness, it was believed that Muslims would feel they had more of a stake in the national community, and would thus be less likely to riot.

At the same time, British counterterrorism discourse represented Muslims as the nation's external significant other. Following the terrorist attacks of September 2001, Islamist terrorism was identified as a threat to civilisation itself, while the London bombings of July 2005 brought terrorism home as an existential threat to Britain. National identity discourse was employed to respond to both international and domestic terrorist attacks. In the former case, the exteriorisation of Islamist terrorism as 'foreign' marked British Muslims out as 'our' Muslims, sharing in the nation's horror and not to be 'tarred with the same brush' as the hijackers.²²² In the latter, the home-grown nature of the attacks led to a concerted state effort to shape a nationally defined Islam that would promote British values and provide a counter-narrative to radical Islamist ideologies. The articulation of national identity was considered a central remedy for terrorism and counterterrorism discourse was premised on the idea that if

²²² House of Commons, "Hansard Debate 14 September 2001," col. 612.

religious authorities could promote Britishness in an Islamic way, extremism could be quelled.

National identity is an ideological concept that requires constant articulation to be meaningful. To sustain the imagined community of the nation, the state must consistently articulate what it is, and like all discursive identity work, this requires difference. We can only understand what we are by understanding what we are not. In this sense, both community cohesion and counterterrorism were expressions of national identity discourse. Both considered the national community threatened by Muslim difference, and both articulated Britishness as a remedy to the problems believed to be caused by excessive Muslim cultural diversity.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the dichotomy of good/bad Muslims was integral to both discourses but was at its heart an expression of national identity. The 'good' Muslim figure was constructed as secular, liberal, English speaking and integrated, and with strong national attachments, while the 'bad' Muslim was its opposite; overtly religious and foreign in language, dress and ideology, with overriding attachment to the *ummah*, and a strong link with terrorism and extremism. Good Muslims were presented as part of the nation, to be embraced and nurtured out of their cultural exclusivism, while bad Muslims were deeply threatening to national cohesion and national security. The latter figure played the role of the national 'folk devil' after 2001, threatening the nation internally and externally, and thus became the nation's 'significant other'. While community cohesion discourse and practice aimed to contain the 'bad' Muslim internally through coercive civic education practices that targeted Muslim communities as insufficiently integrated, counterterrorism discourse and practice responded to

the external threat by attempting to shape and promote a particularly British Islam that would delegitimize violent Islamist extremism at the ideological level. Both were sustained by the central premise that a strong articulation of Britishness could remedy the problems believed to be caused by excessive attachment to Islam, and it is in this way that British national identity crystallised as dependent upon, and articulated in opposition to, the 'bad' Muslim figure.

Yet, a larger narrative was also articulated through this discourse of national identity. The post-2001 world was a global landscape of binaries, and the invocation of any one implicitly summoned its oppositional other. While 'we' represented freedom, civilisation, and pluralism, 'they' represented despotism, barbarism and fanaticism. The community cohesion discourse's need to integrate Muslims into the nation and the counterterrorism discourse's desire to promote a British Islam both produced an archetypal 'bad' Muslim figure that frustrated these desires and had to be overcome in order to fix national identity, and Muslim identity within it. Yet this figure was the same spectre that haunted the international order in the guise of the Taliban and al Qaeda. The community cohesion's folk devil was the self-segregating Muslim more attached to transnational kinship networks and the international Muslim community than Britain. The 'unacceptable' patriarchal cultural practices (female genital mutilation and forced marriage) of those Muslims targeted by community cohesion were immediately recognisable as those of the Taliban regime that Britain was bombing. Similarly, the folk devil of counterterrorism discourse was the raging Muslim fanatic whose international twin was al Qaeda. Asserting Britishness as a remedy to problematic Muslims within the nation was thus analogous to asserting global belonging to the 'right' side of the international order.

British discourse on Muslims after 2001 was, like nationalist discourse in many other European countries, infused with Islamophobic dimensions. In targeting Muslims as culturally problematic, the community cohesion and counterterrorism discourses reified Islam as the primary identification of Muslims. Yet the apparently parochial domestic dimensions of these discourses were saturated with an understanding of British values as Western and universal. When Blair stated in a 2003 speech to Congress 'ours are not Western values, they are the universal values of the human spirit',²²³ he was explicitly stating the Eurocentric discourse that was implicit in community cohesion and counterterrorism.

As a domestic expression of a global narrative that identified Muslims as the West's cultural 'other', post-2001 British discourse articulated Islamophobia through consistent use of binarism and the representation of the 'bad' Muslim as the nation's 'significant other' that threatened both internal cohesion and national security. It is little wonder that this discourse, with its easily identifiable cast of heroes and villains, was readily consumed and re-articulated by the British public in its understanding of Muslims.

²²³ Tony Blair, "Text of Blair's Speech," *BBC*, 17 July, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3076253.stm [Retrieved 8 January 2014].

Chapter Four - British Muslims and the Discourses of Dysfunction: The Dudley Mosque Controversy

Introduction

British discourse since 2001 has represented Muslims as a problematic minority, focusing on their perceived lack of integration and the security danger that 'Islamic extremism' was thought to present. As the previous chapter argued, the representation of Muslims in Britain in the 2000s came to be dominated by the community cohesion and the counterterrorism discourses. Implicating multiculturalism in general, and Muslim culture in particular, these discourses ran concurrently to represent Muslims as significantly 'other' to British society and responsible for Britain's security woes.

The narratives central to these discourses worked to represent all Muslims as responsible for and dangerous to the internal cohesion and external security of British society. Muslim cultural dysfunctionality became an all-encompassing explanatory discourse that could account for domestic civil unrest and international terrorism without addressing thorny issues of injustice, racism and those domestic and foreign policies that served to promote grievances.

The discourses of community cohesion and counterterrorism and the practices associated with them worked to keep Muslims consistently in the state's gaze and lent ideological support to the notion that Muslim culture was fundamentally 'other' to British societal norms. The previous chapter outlined these dominant

discourses, arguing that these representations of Muslims as threatening and responsible for social problems formed an oppositional 'other' which helped to construct a British national identity infused with positive attributes. The present chapter is concerned with the consequences of such dominant representations in a local context. Taking the case of the long-running Dudley mosque debate, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how dominant national discourses were internalised and re-articulated by the public for specific local purposes.

Throughout most of the last decade the issue of the proposed mosque dominated local politics in the West Midlands town of Dudley. From its launch in 2001, the 'Pride of Dudley' project received a huge amount of local media attention, became the focus of a 22,000 signature strong oppositional petition,²²⁴ and engendered three protests by the 'anti-Islamist' nationalist grassroots group the English Defence League (EDL).²²⁵ Local debates were heavily infused with dominant national discursive themes that focused on the compatibility of Muslims with British majority society.

²²⁴ Telegraph, "Plans to Build 'Mega-Mosque' Scrapped amid Furious Far-Right Protests. 4 May.," 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/7674294/Plans-to-build-mega-mosque-scrapped-amid-furious-far-right-protests.html> [Retrieved 3 March 2012].

²²⁵ Two of these protests were centrally organised and attracted 2000 and 500 supporters respectively on 3 April 2010 and 17 July 2010. The third was a rooftop demonstration, during which a few members of the group occupied the site of the proposed mosque on 3 May 2010. Alastair Jamieson, "Violent Clashes at Mosque Protest," *Telegraph*, 3 April, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/7549964/Violent-clashes-at-mosque-protest.html> [Retrieved 1 March 2012]; Nigel Copsey, "The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality," *London: Faith Matters*, 2010, <http://faith-matters.org/images/stories/fm-reports/english-defense-league-report.pdf> [Retrieved 28 November 2011]; Stourbridge News, "EDL Protest Bill Tops Half-a-Million Pounds," *Stourbridge News*, 21 July, 2010, http://www.stourbridgenews.co.uk/news/8283497.EDL_protest_bill_tops_half_a_million_pounds/ [Retrieved 23 April 2012]. The group returned to Dudley in February 2015 to protest the mosque once more, attracting around 600 demonstrators. Jon Stone, "Thirty People Arrested at EDL Anti-Mosque March in Dudley," *Independent*, 8 February, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/thirty-people-arrested-at-edl-antimosque-march-in-dudley-10031730.html> [Retrieved 29 March 2015].

This chapter considers how correspondents to the letters pages of a local newspaper, *Dudley News*, utilised and rearticulated dominant national discursive themes in a local context in order to argue against construction of the mosque. Community cohesion discourse's focus on the threat that Muslim failure to integrate posed to unified 'British identity', and counterterrorism discourse's emphasis on Muslim culture as existentially threatening to the nation's security, were locally rearticulated to represent Muslims as posing integration and security threats to Dudley. The chapter first delineates the central representations employed by correspondents to *Dudley News*, before employing a critical methodology to analyse these narratives. A first-order critique highlights inconsistencies and fallacies in order to destabilise the discourse on its own terms, while a second-order critique considers the ideological effects of choosing these representations over others.

Considering the local representation of Muslims is advantageous for understanding what constitutes Islamophobia. When speakers employ such discourse, consciously or (more often) not, they are appealing to a set of narratives and stereotypes that are considered to have multi-context explanatory power. A local case study such as this highlights how national discourses that emphasised threat and blame were re-articulated to explain local phenomena, and had long-lasting negative effects for Muslims in Dudley and their claims for religious and civic rights. National discourses, with their central representations of Muslims as unwilling to integrate and prone to violent extremism, found a receptive audience in the locality and had enduring consequences. By appealing to these discourses, those arguing against Dudley mosque portrayed local Muslims as exemplary of this cultural dysfunction in order to prevent change in

the area. These discourses thus served an ideological purpose to maintain an inequitable and discriminatory status quo.

The present chapter takes public discourse as its point of analysis, seeking to determine how far the national discourses discussed in the previous chapter were internalised and articulated by ordinary people in their understanding of a local situation involving Muslims making claims for their religious rights. When the narratives of threat and blame central to these discourses were reinterpreted for local contexts, group identity boundaries were drawn which have proven difficult to demolish.

Dudley and *Dudley News*

Dudley

Dudley is an urban borough in the West Midlands which, according to the 2001 census, had a Muslim population of 2.45 per cent.²²⁶ Dudley Central Mosque has been established in the town centre since the 1970s and its congregation had traditionally strong relations with other faith groups and the population in general. The Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund, which was set up by the government in 2007 as part of its counterterrorism strategy, mentioned Dudley as an example of good practice in its Guidance Notes, positively citing Dudley Muslim Association (DMA) and its work in engaging the local community through conferences, seminars, and exhibitions which aimed to discourage the

²²⁶ Office for National Statistics, "Census 2001: Profiles - Dudley," 2001, 200, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00cr.asp> [Retrieved 20 April 2011].

radicalisation of young Muslims and promote community cohesion and understanding.²²⁷

In 1999, after a series of land swaps with the council, Dudley Muslim Association acquired derelict land on Hall Street for the purpose of building a mosque and community centre, with the agreement stipulating that the building must be iconic and of good quality, and that substantial progress towards completion must have been made before 2008.²²⁸ As a direct result of the September 11 attacks, DMA decided to detach the community centre from the mosque so that it could be used by all sections of the community in an effort to promote integration and understanding, and the plans for the project were launched in February 2005.

Following a series of consultations with locals that aimed to accommodate objections and ensure that the project was in accordance with the character of the area, the mosque's minaret was scaled down to 65 feet and Christian arches were incorporated into the design. Khurshid Ahmed, chairman of DMA, stated:

It is meant to be a celebration of our heritage and Christianity and Judaism are part of that heritage. We believe this will be the first mosque in the world to have half-Christian and half-Muslim architecture. We are very proud of that.²²⁹

²²⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government, "Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Notes for Government Offices and Local Authorities in England," 2007, 12, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/320330.pdf> [Retrieved 7 May 2011].

²²⁸ Frank Reeves, "Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Black Country: Relations Post 9/11," *Waterhouse Consulting Group*, 2009, 92–93, [http://www.waterhouseconsulting.co.uk/Download/Muslims & Non-Muslims in the Black Country Relations Post 911.pdf](http://www.waterhouseconsulting.co.uk/Download/Muslims%20&%20Non-Muslims%20in%20the%20Black%20Country%20Relations%20Post%20911.pdf). [Retrieved 20 April 2011].

²²⁹ Quoted in Martin Bright, "British Muslims Plead for Peace," *The Observer*, 7 December, 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2003/dec/07/race.equality> [Retrieved 30 April 2011].

Despite this, the project received escalating local opposition as a result of campaigns by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the British National Party (BNP), both of whom made the mosque a central issue in local election campaigns.

The area has historically been a site of far-right activity. Simon Darby, the BNP's former Deputy National Chairman, stood in six elections during the decade as a candidate in Dudley's Castle and Priory ward, receiving consistent support, and on one occasion polling more than 40% of the vote.²³⁰ However, although the BNP exploited local concerns in their election literature,²³¹ the initiative was seized by the UKIP St James's ward candidate, Malcolm Davis. Despite having initially voted in favour of the land swap with DMA,²³² Davis spearheaded the anti-mosque campaign, organised the petition against it and was among the first to express opposition in a 2006 letter to *Dudley News*. This letter stressed the Christian heritage of Dudley, stated that the mosque was unnecessary given the small number of Muslims and suggested that it would attract mass immigration into the town, increase racial tension and force public support further to the right.²³³

Although some of these themes were taken up by correspondents to *Dudley News*, particularly the notion that Dudley's heritage would be endangered and, to a lesser extent, the idea that the mosque was unnecessary, public discourse remained remarkably resistant to the local political agenda of either UKIP or the

²³⁰ Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), "Results of Elections," 2011, <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/council-democracy/democracy-elections/results-of-elections/> [Retrieved 7 March 2012].

²³¹ Reeves, "Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Black Country: Relations Post 9/11," 81.

²³² *Ibid.*, 117.

²³³ Malcom Davis, "1,999 Reasons for Concern [Letter to the Editor]," *Dudley News* 15 Sept. (2006), http://www.dudleynews.co.uk/news/yourletters/924328.1_999_reasons_for_concern/ [Retrieved 3 January 2011].

BNP. Both parties made the increased migration of Muslims to Dudley their main focus, a theme that was disregarded by correspondents. Election records show that support for these parties dramatically increased during the decade,²³⁴ and there is little doubt that the mosque issue galvanised this. However, the reasoning and justifications used by correspondents to *Dudley News* in their arguments against the mosque reflected mainstream national discourses to a far greater extent.

Other local issues should also be noted when considering the context of community relations in Dudley, particularly in relation to counterterrorism discourses. Several events affected the perception of Muslims in the area, including the 2001 capture and subsequent internment in Guantanamo Bay of the 'Tipton three', local men caught allegedly fighting against allied troops in Afghanistan,²³⁵ the arrest of two local men (one of whom was the son of Dudley Central Mosque Chairman Ghulam Choudhary) in a December 2003 nationwide anti-terrorism sweep,²³⁶ and the 2007 revelation of a Birmingham-based plot to behead a British soldier.²³⁷ These events gave national counterterrorism discourses a local focus, and alongside a national context of dramatically heightened coverage of Muslim-related issues, served as the backdrop against which the mosque was debated.

Dudley News

²³⁴ Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), "Results of Elections."

²³⁵ Jaykuma A. Menon, "Guantanamo Torture Litigation," *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 6, no. 2 (2008): 323–345.

²³⁶ These men were later released without charge. Bright, "British Muslims Plead for Peace."

²³⁷ Reeves, "Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Black Country: Relations Post 9/11," 111–112; Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-mazer, "Islamophobia Islamophobia Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: Hate Crime:" (2010): 150–151.

Dudley News is a free weekly regional newspaper with a circulation of more than 30,000 and a web presence at dudleynews.co.uk.²³⁸ The letters pages of the newspaper provided an opportunity for locals to voice their concerns about the mosque, anonymously if they wished, and were thus a site of discursive competition for correspondents, in which argumentation was used 'to convince readers of the acceptability of a point of view and to provoke them into an immediate or future course of action.'²³⁹

In order to understand the representations of Muslims during the mosque controversy, I analysed letters to *Dudley News* and examined the narratives utilised by correspondents in their discussions about the mosque. Employing predicate analysis to focus attention on the background information drawn upon and rearticulated by correspondents,²⁴⁰ the analysis proceeded as follows: first, a preliminary analysis of the nouns 'Islam' and 'Muslim' was used to determine which letters would be analysed in greater detail. Those letters with a high frequency of both nouns were subjected to critical discourse analysis, following the reasoning that high-frequency letters represented an attempt made by the author to define, control or produce a 'Muslim' subjectivity.

The search term 'Dudley mosque' generated more than 160 letters covering the period 2006-2010, with 30 of these containing three or more uses of the nouns 'Islam' and/or 'Muslim'. These texts were closely examined using an inductive approach, which decontextualized the letters in order to draw themes,

²³⁸ Newsquest Marketing Services, "Dudley News," 2011, [http://www.nqmarketinghub.co.uk/stourbridge/mediapacks/newspapers/Dudley News.pdf](http://www.nqmarketinghub.co.uk/stourbridge/mediapacks/newspapers/Dudley%20News.pdf) [Retrieved 3 May 2011].

²³⁹ Albert Atkin and John E Richardson, "Arguing about Muslims: (Un)Reasonable Argumentation in Letters to the Editor," *Text & Talk* 27, no. 1 (2007): 2.

²⁴⁰ Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," 232.

narratives and argumentative strands from their representations of Muslims and Islam, before re-examining them in the context of national discourses addressing the same themes of threat and blame. These discursive representations were then subjected to a first order critique, which sought to highlight contradictions inherent within the discourse, and a second order critique, which aimed to expose the ideological effects of the dominant discursive representation of Muslims during the mosque controversy.²⁴¹

The discourses of dysfunction: Threat and blame in *Dudley News* letters

This part of the chapter examines the dominant themes used to represent Muslims and Islam by correspondents to the letters page of *Dudley News*. The vast majority of the letters analysed were opposed to the mosque (those that were not are discussed below), and employed two central discursive themes to shore up their arguments against construction: threat and blame. These discourses overlapped, intertwined and were used in a circular way to support the contentions of one another, culminating in a remarkably hostile and negative overall depiction of Muslims in Dudley.

For *Dudley News* correspondents, Muslims represented both a violent and particularly a terrorist threat and, due to their antagonistic and inassimilable culture, a threat to local and national identity. The discourse of blame similarly took two forms. Muslims were considered collectively responsible for the (violent) actions of other Muslims, as well as being blamed for not wanting to integrate, choosing to self-segregate within their communities and holding themselves apart

²⁴¹ Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," 397.

from the majority Dudley community. These narratives relied on conceptions that were pervasive in the dominant national representations of Muslims discussed in the previous chapter. The next section of this chapter takes each of these themes in turn, locating local representations in the national discourses of community cohesion and counterterrorism and critically analysing the underlying assumptions that sustain this overarching negative portrayal of Muslims in Britain.

Despite their prevalence, the dominant discourses are far from unproblematic and the assumptions that underpin them are highly contestable. The following section identifies the narratives employed by correspondents to represent Muslims and Islam and critically analyses the assumptions that underpin them at both the national level and the local level of Dudley, before considering the ideological effects of these representations for Muslims and non-Muslims in the locality.

The threat of violence

Arguments against the construction of Dudley mosque coalesced centrally around the threat of violence that Muslims were perceived to represent. Foregrounding Muslim culture, correspondents presented their opposition to the mosque through a fear-laden discourse which highlighted the Muslims' cultural predisposition to violence:

Is it no wonder the people of Dudley do not want this mosque and community centre? We are living in an era where so called Muslims will commit mass

murder and suicide in order to make this world Islamic using whatever means they can get hold of. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

The conflation of 'extremists' and Muslims in general provided an apparently rational reason for opposing the mosque, and the notion that Muslims were culturally predisposed to violent behaviour, drew upon common-sense background understandings that were repeated across the letters:

If a church was built in Pakistan it would be bombed the next day. The Muslims would go mad before it was even built. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

The narrative that Muslims in Dudley potentially represented a violent threat drew upon the counterterrorism discourse's targeting of Muslim populations as particularly prone to violence. In addition, the perceived link between Muslims and terrorism, and more crucially terrorism and mosques, was also used to argue against construction:

It could be another breeding ground for Islamic terrorists and the people's concerns need to be heard. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

... some Muslims are indeed bogey men, who use mosques to train and indoctrinate less informed Muslims to walk alongside decent members of society, including fellow Muslims, and detonate their bombs... [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 7 March 2007].

This uncritical understanding that mosques and terrorism were linked was pervasive amongst the letters analysed. Since the link between Muslims and

terrorism was well established, the authors had no need to substantiate claims such as these. That mosques *had* been used for breeding terrorism was accepted background information, and that all mosques should be suspected as a result was considered self-evident.

Repetition of these themes helped to cement the idea that Muslims represented a danger to Dudley, and the relationship believed to exist between Muslims and violence allowed correspondents to present their opposition to the mosque as rational and reasonable in the face of such threat.

The threat of violence was a central feature of counterterrorism discourse, and relied upon the association of Islam with terrorism and extremism. As the previous chapter argued, Prevent, the government's counterterrorism programme, fixed its gaze solely on Muslim communities and worked to construct Muslims as particularly prone to violent extremism. Several studies have demonstrated how government language,²⁴² legislation²⁴³ and the media²⁴⁴ drew upon and sustained this link of Islam with violence.

Mosques were considered particularly dangerous from this perspective as the social space where radicalisation into extremist ideas occurred, and this relationship was reinforced when Tony Blair, in response to the 7 July 2005

²⁴² Allen, "Justifying Islamophobia: A Post-9/11 Consideration of the European Union and British Contexts"; Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse."

²⁴³ Ansari, "British Anti-Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-Hunt"; C. Pantazis and S. Pemberton, "From the 'Old' to the 'New' Suspect Community: Examining the Impacts of Recent UK Counter-Terrorist Legislation," *British Journal of Criminology* 49, no. 5 (2009): 646–666.

²⁴⁴ Christopher Allen, "Islamophobia in the Media since September 11th," in *Exploring Islamophobia: Deepening Our Understanding of Islam and Muslims* (University of Westminster, London, 2001), <http://www.fairuk.org/docs/Islamophobia-in-the-media-since-911-ChristopherAllen.pdf> [Retrieved 30 December 2010]; Liz Fekete, "Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State," *Race & Class* 46, no. 1 (2004): 3–29.

attacks, announced plans to close down 'extremist mosques'.²⁴⁵ The discursive relationship between mosques and terrorism had already been well established when these plans were abandoned in December 2005 amidst fears that such legislation would encourage misidentification of Islam with terrorism.

Correspondents to *Dudley News* were particularly receptive to this narrative, and used the link between Islam and violence to argue against construction of the mosque based on the unidimensionalism of Muslims as potentially extremist and the notion that mosques were inherently dangerous as hotbeds of radicalism.

Notwithstanding the correspondents' receptivity to counterterrorism discourse's tendency to target Islam itself as particularly prone to violence, there have been numerous studies that problematize this common sense understanding. Major empirical studies have repeatedly refuted the perceived link between Islam and terrorism, including the analysis of Gallup polling data by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, representative of more than a billion Muslims, which demonstrated that among the 7 per cent of respondents who viewed the September 11 attacks as completely justifiable, not a single respondent employed religious justification and there was no evidence of correlation between religiosity and extremism.²⁴⁶

The association between mosques and extremism has also been subjected to critical analysis. Marc Sageman's work on terrorist networks, for example, stressed that although a few 'fundamentalist' mosques were sites of emergent terrorism, the vast majority were conservative institutions with a strong emphasis

²⁴⁵ Patrick Wintour, "Blair Vows to Root out Extremism," *Guardian*, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/aug/06/terrorism.july7> [Retrieved 17 October 2011].

²⁴⁶ John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, "Who Will Speak for Islam?," *World Policy Journal* 25, no. 3 (2008): 50. See also: Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005).

on the *status quo* and much more likely to constrain extremism than facilitate it.²⁴⁷ Muslim organisations themselves have stressed this point. As the Muslim Council of Britain's Iqbal Sacranie stated, mosques have been 'misidentified and stereotyped as incubators of violent extremism, while the social reality is that they serve as centres of moderation.'²⁴⁸

The work of local Muslims in Dudley to discredit links between Islam and terrorism was approvingly cited in the government's *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund Guidance Notes*, which highlight the positive work of DMA through conferences, seminars and exhibitions which aimed to discourage radicalisation of young Muslims and promote community cohesion and understanding.²⁴⁹ Although the fears articulated in *Dudley News* reflected dominant discursive representations of Muslims as linked to violence, national and local realities show this relationship to be based on flawed understandings.

The threat to identity

The consistent focus on a person's 'Muslimness' as their primary identity encouraged the portrayal of national and religious identities as mutually exclusive. Since Muslims were considered intrinsically 'other' to British and Dudley culture, they were presented as threatening to national and local identity. Religious identity was thought to take precedence over every other, and conflict with both local customs and the duty to obey British laws:

²⁴⁷ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 143.

²⁴⁸ Quoted in Alan Travis, "Reprieve for 'Extremist' Mosques," *Guardian*, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/dec/16/terrorism.politics> [Retrieved 8 October 2011].

²⁴⁹ Department for Communities and Local Government, "Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Notes for Government Offices and Local Authorities in England," 12.

... Muslims can only offer selective recognition of British laws which in turn means that they might conceivably be expected to break them if the occasion arose. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

Personal stories served to bolster the claims of correspondents that Muslim culture impeded integration in the area:

My wife, who was recovering from an operation at the time, was refused help in unloading crates of wine from a taxi driver's vehicle because to touch the cases would be against his religion... [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 11 January 2007].

This type of personal narration demonstrates the way local and national concerns were entwined through anecdotal stories which attempted to illustrate cultural incompatibility. The inflexible nature of Muslim culture was also a central theme, and was employed to explain why Muslims were so problematic:

Muslims cannot compromise because their religion does not allow it. They must therefore relentlessly change the world around them to suit their own image... [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 21 August 2008].

Presented as unable to compromise, peaceful co-existence with Muslims in Dudley was considered impossible. Muslims were portrayed as attempting to change Dudley's landscape and culture to be more Islamic, and support for the mosque was thus constructed as tacit support for the cultural destruction of Dudley:

... [A previous correspondent] correctly stated that: "it is part of the Muslim culture to deceive and manipulate". It is also part of their culture to try to

dominate and intimidate wherever they live. And that's exactly what Khurshid Ahmed and his cronies are trying to do! [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 12 August 2007].

This presentation of 'Muslim culture' as static and monolithic not only paved the way for portrayals of Muslims as responsible for the actions of their co-religionists (discussed below), but also served to present Muslims as essentialised and sharing culturally conditioned nefarious aims. Drawing on orientalist stereotypes, this representation of the threat to Dudley was reliant on the notion that Muslims were inherently problematic because their culture determined them to such an extent that they simply could not be any other way.

Much of the discussion about the incompatibility of Muslim culture with Dudley was based on the idea that there is a finite amount of culture available to a person, or within an area, and that if one culture advanced, another must retreat:

We want to keep Dudley, not change its name and culture to Islamabad.
[Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

This underlying understanding permeated articulations that called for opposition to the mosque because of threat it potentially posed to the dominant culture, and tied in with the idea that the mosque would become the focal point of Dudley, somehow erasing its past:

Our Black Country heritage is the only guaranteed thing we thought we could pass on to our children. Now even that will be gone and in its place we will be known for the mosque... [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 1 March 2007].

This view reinforced the representation of the mosque as a provocative symbolic statement that placed an Islamic claim on Dudley:

... [the mosque] would dominate and tell all the non-Muslim people (not just the white British) this is our area, this is our town, this is our borough and one day, this is going to be [our] country. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 12 August 2007].

The cumulative effect of the discourse of threat within the letters pages of *Dudley News* was to present local Muslims as deeply unsettling people. Muslims were presented as shunning both local custom and national law, intent on violence, and aiming to bring Dudley's culture, history and heritage to an end. However, most troubling for the correspondents, was that even if Dudley's Muslims were not engaged in such activities, they all had the *potential* to be so, and thus were all in some way to blame.

The representation of Muslims as a threat to national or local identities is based on the belief that for Muslims Islam takes precedence over all other identities and that it is inherently oppositional to British, and Dudley, culture. This understanding was present in the discourse of community cohesion, which was predicated on the notion that Muslims were particularly resistant to national assimilation,²⁵⁰ and counterterrorism discourse, which served to position Britain as existentially threatened by Islam and its adherents.²⁵¹ The central premises of these discourses were recycled and re-articulated by the correspondents, who

²⁵⁰ Amin, "Unruly Strangers? The 2001 Urban Riots in Britain," 463; Claire Worley, "'It's Not about Race. It's about the Community': New Labour and 'Community Cohesion,'" *Critical Social Policy* 25, no. 4 (2005): 483–484.

²⁵¹ Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason, "'Tolerance, Freedom, Justice and Peace?': Britain, Australia and Anti-Muslim Racism since 11 September 2001," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 27, no. 4 (2006): 373; Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," 420.

positioned Dudley's Muslims as implicitly suspicious, potentially disloyal and dangerous.

That Islamic identity is primary has been challenged by numerous studies. In his historical study of Muslim presence in Britain, Humayun Ansari concluded that British Muslims have seldom viewed Islam as their sole form of political and social identification.²⁵² Afshar *et al.* have demonstrated that hyphenated and hybrid identities were readily taken on by Muslim women in Britain, who accepted cultural, ethnic and national identities that defined them differently in different circumstances.²⁵³ Polling data further problematizes the notion that Muslims consider their Islamic identity to be in conflict with national identity. A 2007 Gallup poll found that 77% of British Muslims claimed to identify with the United Kingdom (compared with 50% of the general population), and 82% said that they were loyal to Britain.²⁵⁴ The emphasis on a stable Islamic identity that acts as the primary self-definition for Muslims was similarly refuted by young Muslims in Luton, who emphasised the fluidity of identities: 'We have multiple identity and according to mood and circumstance we call ourselves Bangladeshi, British, Muslim or Lutonian or whatever.'²⁵⁵ Indeed, local identities have been shown to have greater salience than national identity. As Justin Gest has pointed out, British separation of ethnocultural factors from citizenship means that belonging

²⁵² Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2004), 4.

²⁵³ Haleh Afshar, Rob Aitken, and Myfanwy Franks, "Feminisms, Islamophobia and Identities," *Political Studies* 53, no. 2 (2005): 273.

²⁵⁴ Duncan Gardham, "More Muslims Identify Themselves as British than Rest of Population," *Telegraph*, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/5287105/More-Muslims-identify-themselves-as-British-than-rest-of-population.html> [Retrieved 13 October 2011].

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Home Affairs Committee (HAC), "Terrorism and Community Relations, Sixth Report" (London, House of Commons, 2005), para. 188, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmhaff/165/16502.htm> [Retrieved 8 October 2011].

is more likely to be conceived in terms of passports and residence, rather than an emotional attachment to the nation.²⁵⁶

Other empirical works have suggested that British Muslims identify more strongly with local, rather than national, culture. Steve Fenton's study of young adults' conceptions of national identity found that while a small proportion embraced or enthused about English or British identity, there was a broad band of indifference and hostility towards assuming a national identity, and local identities were often cited as more important.²⁵⁷ The prevailing assumption that British Muslims viewed their religious and national identities as incompatible relies on a static and bounded conception of identity that finds little empirical support.

Blame for the actions of other Muslims

The central theme of blame that ran through the representations was based on the underlying premise that all Muslims were determined by their overriding Islamic identity. This unidimensionalism assumed that Muslim behaviour was derived from an Islamic cultural imperative.

One effect of representing Muslims as inescapably culturally determined was that they were considered collectively responsible for any action undertaken by any Muslim anywhere in the world. This logic allowed the correspondents to hold all Muslims responsible for the actions of some, and the mosque was portrayed

²⁵⁶ Justin Gest, *Apart: Alienated and Engaged Muslims in the West* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2010), 199.

²⁵⁷ Steve Fenton, "Indifference towards National Identity: What Young Adults Think about Being English and British," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007): 329, 334–345.

as the thin end of an Islamic wedge that would lead, as it did in all Muslim societies, to repression:

You do not object to the mosque, but at what point would you object? When Islam becomes the dominant religion? When TV is banned? When freedom of speech is banned? [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

Correspondents invoked the negative characteristics of some Muslim societies in order to conflate the characteristics of particular Muslim societies with the wishes, desires and essence of all Muslims. This narrative not only assigned blame to all Muslims for the actions of some, but also implied that Muslims should apologise for the anti-democratic nature of some Muslim regimes:

I'd ask Mr Ahmed to name one democratic multi-party, pluralistic Muslim state before he condemns the democratic decision of an elected council and the democratic voice of the people of Dudley. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 5 April 2007].

The above passage draws directly on this notion of collective responsibility. To be hypocritical as the author suggests, Ahmed would have to share the blame for the crimes against democracy that are invoked. Such a position can only be sustained by the underlying assumption that Muslims everywhere are somehow answerable for the actions of their co-religionists.

The notion that Muslims should take responsibility for the lack of pluralism and democracy in other Muslim societies was similarly applied to British society, here groups established to respond to discrimination were charged with creating social disharmony, rather than seeking to alleviate it. Again, all Muslims were implicated as accountable:

If Mr Ahmed wishes to build harmony in society he should concentrate on disbanding the Muslim Council of Great Britain, the Federation of Black Police Officers and the British Muslim Initiative. How can we have harmony with these organisations in place? [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 7 March 2007].

The discourse of blame for the actions of other Muslims in *Dudley News* combined to assert that Muslims had no right to agitate for a mosque until they had put their own house in order.

Because culture was implicated as responsible for both the 2001 uprisings and the September 11, 2001 and 7 July 2005 terrorist attacks, a discourse of blame emerged that used the notion of 'shared values' to imply that Muslims were collectively responsible for the actions of their co-religionists. The Northern uprisings were presented as a problem of excessive cultural relativity that had weakened nationalistic attachment,²⁵⁸ while the intensive legislative focus²⁵⁹ of counterterrorism on Muslim communities promoted a discourse of blame that obliged ordinary Muslims to consistently and monotonously condemn terrorism and disclaim extremism.²⁶⁰

The discourse of collective responsibility is predicated on the unidimensionalising of Muslims as essentially the same because of their shared

²⁵⁸ Alexander, "Imagining the Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Masculinity and Youth after 'the Riots,'" 534; Burnett, "Community, Cohesion and the State," 7; Tahir Abbas, "Muslim Minorities in Britain: Integration, Multiculturalism and Radicalism in the Post-7/7 Period," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, no. 3 (2007): 297.

²⁵⁹ Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR), "Counter-Terrorism Powers: Reconciling Security and Liberty in an Open Society: A Discussion Paper - A Muslim Response," 2004, 19, <http://www.fairuk.org/policy12.htm> [Retrieved 10 January 2011]; Home Affairs Committee (HAC), "Terrorism and Community Relations, Sixth Report," para. 171; Pantazis and Pemberton, "From the 'Old' to the 'New' Suspect Community: Examining the Impacts of Recent UK Counter-Terrorist Legislation," 652–654.

²⁶⁰ Gest, *Apart: Alienated and Engaged Muslims in the West*, 7.

adherence to Islam and the inescapable effects of 'Muslim culture'. This was regularly drawn upon by the correspondents who highlighted negative aspects of some Muslim societies in order to make broader arguments about the compatibility of Muslims with Dudley in particular and Britain in general.

It barely needs to be pointed out that given the existence of more than a billion Muslims, settled on every continent, speaking fifty languages and innumerable variations of denomination and cultural tradition any pronouncement on 'Muslim culture' must be treated with the utmost caution.²⁶¹ As Bruno Etienne has argued, Islam is united only in its monotheism, with every other aspect of Muslim life the object of sharp contestation between and within traditions. Contrary to the thesis that holds 'Muslim culture' as transhistorically uniting Muslims, this is precisely because the historical challenges encountered by differently socially situated Muslim societies have produced varied interpretations of the Prophetic tradition.²⁶²

At a more local level, the work of Frank Reeves demonstrates the vast differences in opinion between Dudley Muslims on issues such as dietary practices, religious clothing and attitudes towards homosexuality. His survey of Dudley residents showed that 20 percent of Muslim respondents were prepared to relax their attitude to *halal* food at a social event out of politeness, more than a quarter (26.7%) disapproved of women wearing the *niqab* (face veil) in public places and over half (56.7%) believed that homosexuals should be treated equally.²⁶³ Reeves's work demonstrates that there are significant differences of opinion even in a small sample on issues that are often articulated as evidence of

²⁶¹ Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," 413.

²⁶² Etienne, "Islam and Violence," 238–239.

²⁶³ Reeves, "Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Black Country: Relations Post 9/11," 69,66,62.

Muslim cultural unidimensionalism. The notion that there exists a determinate fundamental 'Muslim culture' that shapes the behaviour of all Muslims does not bear scrutiny at the national or local level.

Blame for lack of integration

Finally, the correspondents laid the blame for perceived lack of integration with Muslims, charging them with deliberately holding themselves aloof and choosing to self-segregate:

I myself am convinced by many conversations and other exchanges with Muslims that they are not interested in integration... [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 11 January 2007].

They talk of integration, but they are the ones not wanting to integrate, they alone wish to take over! [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 1 February 2007].

The notion that Muslims in Dudley were inherently problematic was central to such arguments. One writer compared the controversy over the proposed mosque with a recently opened Hindu temple, stating that it had not:

... created anything like the controversy that the proposed Dudley mosque continues to create. Perhaps Dudley's Muslims could learn something from the Hindu community? [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 September 2006].

The author refers to a Hindu temple situated two miles away, which was completed in 2006 and was, at the time, the largest in Europe. The fact that

this did not generate such controversy was taken by the author to indicate that Hindus got on with their lives peacefully, unlike Muslims:

Everything a Muslim thinks, says and does is governed by the will of their God with the result that compromise is impossible... Without compromise we cannot have integration [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 10 November 2006].

Through a discourse which presented Islam as completely determinative of Muslim life, the correspondents worked to culturalize social realities and hold Muslims responsible for perceived lack of integration in the local area.

The writers were also pessimistic about the idea that the detached community centre would promote mixing between people of different backgrounds, primarily because Muslims were believed to be hostile to others:

... one must really doubt that, in reality, 'the centre would be for the whole community and not be race or faith specific' since in many ways the Muslim community is becoming more and more inclusive [sic] and inward facing. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 September 2006].

Will all people irrespective of what race, religion and nationality be allowed to do 'their thing' without objections from the Muslim sector? Or will it inevitable be a case of whenever anyone else wants to use it, the place is fully booked? [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

By representing Muslims in Dudley as hostile, correspondents not only made their objections to the mosque appear rational, but also attended to potential charges of Islamophobia by marking out Muslims as the instigators of community strife.

This can be understood as a form of victim blaming, whereby the subjects of discriminatory discourse and practice were blamed for the discrimination they received. By doubting the inclusiveness of the community centre, the correspondents shifted the blame for poor community relations on to Muslims.

The discourse of blame worked to hold all Muslims responsible, both for the actions of their co-religionists and for a perceived lack of local and national integration. The mosque project was represented within this imaginary as a deliberate attempt to antagonise the non-Muslim population of Dudley. All Muslims were implicated in the discourse of blame, and the correspondents held them to account by withholding support for the mosque

Lack of integration was a central theme of community cohesion discourse, which contained the implicit suggestion that Muslims were responsible for their 'parallel lives' and had chosen self-segregation from the majority population.²⁶⁴ Nationally, this was articulated as a problem of excessive cultural diversity which was managed by reversion to a monocultural ideological project that championed 'British values' and treated diversity as suspicious.²⁶⁵ Correspondents to *Dudley News* rearticulated this national discourse of culture as problematic in the local context to argue that since Muslims were not willing to integrate with Dudley, the mosque should not be permitted.

Self-segregation is a problematic concept, and implies a desire on the part of those suspected of it to remain aloof from the majority in order to protect their

²⁶⁴ Ouseley, "Community Pride Not Prejudice - Making Diversity Work in Bradford," 18. The Cantle Report in particular emphasised that the parallel lives of residents who lived in mixed areas but did not have contact with one another had been a major cause of the 'misunderstandings' that had led to the 2001 uprisings. Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRC), *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team (chaired by Ted Cantle)*, 9.

²⁶⁵ Derek McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2008), 144.

cultural identity. As Ludi Simpson's work demonstrates, cultural explanations for segregated living patterns fail to appreciate the realities of movement, particularly in areas of deprivation. His work on Bradford, the archetypal polarised city, shows that the number of predominantly South Asian (mostly Muslim) areas did increase, but that this was due to population growth from immigration and natural increase, rather than a result of the movement of residents to areas of South Asian concentration.²⁶⁶ Polling data on Muslims' attitudes to integration similarly throws doubt on the notion of self-segregation. A 2006 Pew Center poll found that while 64% of Britons surveyed believed that Muslims wanted to be distinct from society, only 35% of Muslims agreed with this statement, and a significant minority of British Muslims said that they believed Muslims in Britain mostly wanted to adopt national customs.²⁶⁷

Frank Reeves's local survey similarly found little evidence that Muslims in Dudley sought to self-segregate. In fact, the overwhelming majority (93.3%) wanted the council to provide more opportunities for people of different religious backgrounds to mix. Contrastingly, only 28.6% of non-Muslims were in favour of this, while more than a third (38.2%) were opposed.²⁶⁸ Reeves's data suggests that what is perceived as self-segregation is driven more by lack of opportunity for mixing than by a deliberate drive on the part of Muslims to hold themselves apart from majority society. Indeed, the fact that the original plans for the mosque were changed in order to detach the community centre from the mosque so that it could be used by all communities further undermines the idea that

²⁶⁶ Ludi Simpson, "Statistics of Racial Segregation: Measures, Evidence and Policy," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 3 (2004): 677.

²⁶⁷ Pew Research Centre, *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other*, Director (The Pew Global Attitudes Project: Washington DC, 2006), www.pewglobal.org/files/pdf/253.pdf [Retrieved 14 October 2011].

²⁶⁸ Reeves, "Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Black Country: Relations Post 9/11," 76.

Muslims in Dudley did not wish to mix. On the contrary, it seems that a significant minority of non-Muslims were hostile to integrating with Dudley's Muslim communities.

Contesting the dominant discourses

Surprisingly few of the letters that made it into the pages of *Dudley News* contested these dominant discourses. Whether this reflects an inclusion bias on the part of the newspaper's editor, or whether it is indicative of a widespread support for these positions is not clear. What is clear is that the micro-climate of hostility made alternative positions difficult to sustain.

Only five of the 30 letters studied in detail expressed no opposition to the mosque, and only three of these actually engaged with the dominant discourses in order to refute them (the other two focused instead on the practicalities of the project and argued that a mosque was needed but that plans should be scaled down). One correspondent, who did engage with the dominant discourse, contested the unidimensionalism of Muslims within the letters page:

If one faith person does something wrong it does not mean that all of them are the same... What you see on TV and [in the] media if not what all Muslims are like (terrorist). [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 7 March 2007].

Another engaged with the fear among the correspondents that Dudley values would be corrupted, asking:

Is their identity and confidence in themselves so fragile that they can't tolerate people different to themselves and instead see them as a threat?

What else could be responsible for such hostile views that see Muslims as some kind of boogie-men ready to rape our children, steal our cars, and use mosques to build bombs, train terrorists or plan attacks? [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 28 February 2007].

The final letter in this group acknowledged that Islam was viewed as threatening, but argued that the growing number of Muslims in the area needed somewhere to pray:

I think the thing that gets to people the most is that Islam is growing and that's the threat to them, not the building of the mosque. Muslims go to the mosque for a place to worship, not to drink tea and biscuits like they do in churches. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007].

The latter two letters elicited responses from others and it is worth briefly addressing the way in which those opposed to the mosque reaffirmed the dominant discourses in their counter-arguments to the points raised. A reply to the second letter, which had argued that those opposed to the mosque based their arguments on irrational fears of Muslims, was published the following week and simply refuted the central argument by maintaining that some Muslims were terrorists who used mosques to plan attacks, thereby restating the link between Muslims, mosques and terrorism.²⁶⁹ The reply to the third letter followed a similar strategy, arguing that there was a lack of understanding between Muslims and

²⁶⁹ 'In answer to Shane Hyde of Sedgley (or should it be Dr. Jekyll): He writes of "a loud minority", "no clear rational reason", "ill-informed mob with stereotypical views who think of Muslims as boogey men who use mosques to train terrorists or plan attacks". What planet does he come from? I pity him if he has to watch Big Brother to form his opinions of society. If he watched grown up programs like the news, he would know that some Muslims are indeed bogey men, who use mosques to train and indoctrinate less informed Muslims to walk alongside decent members of society, including fellow [M]uslims, and detonate their bombs as they did on 21/7.' [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 7 March 2007].

non-Muslims, but that Muslims were to blame for this because of their involvement in terrorism:

So far lessons have been dominated by the twin towers, holiday villages in Bali and the London Underground etc. Some insight into her beliefs would be more welcomed than the strident tone. Drinking tea in church seems far more acceptable than some of the activities associated with mosques. [Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 28 February 2007].

The overall effect was that those who did engage with the dominant discourses in order to counteract them were silenced by a 'common sense' understanding that Muslims, mosques and violence *were* linked and because of this the risk to Dudley, should the mosque be built, was simply too great.

In sum, correspondents to *Dudley News* held to a representation of Muslims as threatening to national security and national identity, and collectively responsible for terrorism and a lack of integration. Dominant discourses that portrayed Muslims as problematic both externally (to security) and internally (to identity), were rearticulated in the local context in order to underscore arguments that the mosque was unacceptable.

The ideological effects of the discourses of threat and blame

The first order critique above draws attention to the assumptions that underpin the discourses of threat and blame. A second order critique aims to underline the ways the discourses function politically and ideologically in their representations

of Muslims, and considers how these discursive associations shaped the identities and relationships of all players in the conflict over Dudley mosque.

The most conspicuous ideological effect of the discourses employed by correspondents to *Dudley News* was the construction of a 'Muslim other', which facilitated the representation of a culturally stable Dudley threatened by the presence of Muslims. The discourses of threat and blame relied on the representation of Muslims as culturally predisposed to socially unacceptable behaviour, and this allowed the correspondents to make sweeping generalisations about all Muslims in order to oppose the mosque. Predicated on the explanatory purchase of 'Muslim culture' as the primary maker and marker of behaviour, Muslims were positioned as intrinsically 'other' to Dudley and threatening to the culture of the locality. Kinnvall and Linden have highlighted that the pressures of globalisation and migration force both migrants and 'host' societies to rework their identities in response to the new realities they face, causing some to retreat into a mythical past in an attempt to 'securitise' subjectivity by clinging to one identity.²⁷⁰ The correspondent's anxieties about Muslims can be understood from this perspective as an attempt to fix destabilised identities. By projecting the image of an eternal and unchanging 'Dudley culture' as threatened by culturally antagonistic Muslims, the non-Muslim community was brought together and identities were articulated against this perceived threat.

The discourses of threat and blame also functioned to sustain existing power relations. The addition of a mosque to Dudley was consistently represented as an intolerable challenge, threatening to its history and heritage and something that

²⁷⁰ C. Kinnvall and J. Linden, "Dialogical Selves between Security and Insecurity: Migration, Multiculturalism, and the Challenge of the Global," *Theory & Psychology* 20, no. 5 (2010): 598–599.

could not be absorbed or accepted. None of the correspondents were willing to entertain the notion that Dudley culture could adjust in order to accommodate the mosque. Gabriele Marranci has theorised this as fear of the 'transruptive' effects of Islam on European identities. In this sense, as Islam fails to assimilate and fade within contemporary Europe, the identities of European states and peoples are changed as they come into contact with Muslims, who are also transformed by the encounter.²⁷¹ Marranci has argued that contemporary Islamophobia is a fear of this change, and manifests in the desire to uphold traditional identities. This was evident at the local level in Dudley, where Muslims were portrayed in negative and threatening ways as making unreasonable demands of the locality, which in turn served to justify Dudley's overwhelmingly hostile reaction. The problem of deteriorating community relations was then cast not as the result of the hostility of non-Muslims, but due to the unreasonable demands and alien values of Muslims.

At a more concrete level, discourses work to constrain and establish possibilities for action by making some actions appear inevitable and others simply implausible.²⁷² The dominant discourses in Dudley worked in this way to put pressure on decision-makers to reject the proposal. Reeves noted that his research team was instructed not to undertake the survey of Dudley residents prior to the outcome of the May 2008 elections lest an already volatile and contentious situation was further provoked.²⁷³ The unanimous rejection of the proposal by Dudley Council's Planning Committee in February 2007 may also, arguably, be seen as a response to the dominant discourses exhibited in *Dudley*

²⁷¹ Marranci, "Multiculturalism, Islam and the Clash of Civilisations Theory: Rethinking Islamophobia," 115–116.

²⁷² Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2001), 121.

²⁷³ Reeves, "Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Black Country: Relations Post 9/11," 81–82.

News. Of course, this is not to suggest that the letters page of a local newspaper was the only, or even primary, source of pressure on councillors. Huge public interest, the campaigns of far-right parties, sustained and hostile local media coverage and the 22,000-strong oppositional petition all coalesced to make rejection of the proposal an attractive option for councillors, who knew that should the DMA appeal the decision it would be taken out of their hands and referred to the government's planning inspector. Nonetheless, the importance of the discursive representations within the letters should not be overlooked, especially in free newspaper delivered throughout the borough. The letters page functioned as a site of contestation and argumentation, and correspondence aimed to call others to action to reject the mosque. As such, the dominant discourses within the letters made it clear to decision-makers that the only acceptable course of action was rejection of the plans.

Related to this are longer term effects of strained community relations and the breakdown of trust that some Muslims felt following the council's rejection of the mosque. Despite extensive remodelling of plans in the face of local objections, the proposal was unanimously rejected by councillors against the recommendations of their own planning officers. Given the efforts made to accommodate local concerns, it is not surprising that Muslims felt indignant at what they perceived as the discriminatory and Islamophobic nature of the council's decision to deny permission.²⁷⁴ Justin Gest has highlighted that the perception that Muslim voices were being ignored in local struggles led to a heightened sense of alienation among young Muslims in East London.²⁷⁵ Again, the cumulative effects of a consistently hostile discursive atmosphere in *Dudley*

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 145.

²⁷⁵ Gest, *Apart: Alienated and Engaged Muslims in the West*, 192.

News should not be underestimated. As negative stereotypical representations mounted in the pages of the newspaper, the overwhelming public sentiment towards Muslims would have left few in doubt that they were unwelcome and unwanted in the area.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically analysed the dominant narratives expressed in opposition to the proposed Dudley mosque in order to demonstrate how the national representations of Muslims discussed in the previous chapter were employed, rearticulated and altered in local context. The purpose of the chapter is not to suggest that these were the only representations of Muslims circulating, or that these views were necessarily representative of the majority of Dudley residents. Rather, it aims to highlight how discourses with national prominence and elite approval furnished the anti-mosque position with a veneer of rationality, maintained existing power relations and served to silence alternative representations in the din of hostility, fear and threat.

The discourses of dysfunction served a clear purpose for Dudley during the mosque controversy. The national focus on Muslims as culturally responsible for the gravest contemporary ills allowed social problems such as extremism, terrorism, segregated towns and lack of social cohesion to be de-contextualised, de-historicised and repackaged as products of Muslim cultural malady. Conceived as such, reform was portrayed as the responsibility of *Muslims*, and something the state could only hope to challenge by compelling its supposedly recalcitrant subjects to assimilate. Such thinking is characteristic of a problem solving

approach to social management,²⁷⁶ in which the *status quo* is left secure and unscrutinised, and the historical policies, inequalities, political grievances and discrimination that have contributed to contemporary problems are dismissed in favour of an all-encompassing discourse of Muslim cultural dysfunction. The problem is with 'them', not 'us', and the solution does not require 'us' to change in any way, except to welcome Muslims out of their cultural bondage and make the transition to 'integration' as attractive and straightforward as possible.

The portrayal of the mosque as an unacceptable challenge to Dudley's history and heritage pivoted on the local articulation of dominant national representations of Muslims as dangerously opposed to an ill-defined and mythical 'British culture'. Muslims were not considered part of Dudley culture, and the idea that Dudley could itself change to include markers of Muslim faith was dismissed. The discourse demanded recognition of the eternal and unchanging heritage of Dudley, and the repeated calls for Muslims to integrate in order to be better citizens of Dudley were invested with the corresponding claim that to be a good citizen of Dudley one must respect the heritage of the town and consequently oppose the mosque as damaging to this. The demands for integration were couched in conditions that called for Muslims to abandon legitimate claims for their faith in the interests of a history from which they were excluded, and a future in which their participation was unwanted.

Muslims are clearly considered most dangerous when they are *visibly* Islamic, that is, when they make claims for their faith, in this case by calling for a new place of worship. It is at this point when anxieties about cultural incompatibilities

²⁷⁶ Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 128.

come to dominate the discourse, and representation of Muslims as fundamentally alien to British culture becomes a key theme.

These representations support the conceptualisation of Islamophobia as cultural racism. Through an unswerving focus on 'Muslimness' and an understanding that all Muslim action and behaviour was culturally conditioned, Muslims were differentiated from non-Muslims and de-differentiated from one another through the unidimensionalising focus on the determinative nature of Muslim culture. It was this dual process that allowed Dudley's Muslims to be compared to rioters in Bradford and terrorists in Pakistan. A political conditionality was attached to Muslim interaction with society that demanded Muslims first show their willingness to integrate and repudiate terrorism before any benefits could be distributed to them. But since any claims for faith were tainted with the dangerous mark of Muslim culture, Dudley's Muslims found themselves in an impossible position.

The discourses of threat and blame and their underpinning construction of Muslims as unidimensional and culturally dysfunctional served as discursive weapons for the correspondents to argue against change in Dudley. Yet the assumptions that these discourses are based upon are vulnerable to critique at both national and local levels. Recognising the way in which these discourses serve to disguise discriminatory practices aimed at Muslims, by explaining them as the natural outcome of antithetical cultures clashing, is essential in order to challenge dominant narratives and open up spaces for contestation. As a generation of young British Muslims grows up expected the full rights and entitlements of citizenship and making claims for their religion, discourses that exclude them as not properly belonging to the nation, while simultaneously

reprimanding them for failing to integrate, serve to foster an alienation and disaffection that can all too easily be exploited.

Chapter Five - 'Not racist, not violent, just no longer silent': Racist discourse construction and the ideology of the English Defence League

Introduction

The previous chapters have demonstrated how the discourses of threat and blame worked to represent Muslims since 2001 as dangerous to identity and security. At a national level this took the form of community cohesion and counterterrorism discourse, and these were rearticulated at a local level during the Dudley mosque debate for the purpose of preventing local change. My aim in these chapters has been to show how these representations were constructed and how they were able to gain enough social currency to be utilised for local struggles. As I argued in the previous chapter, these representations can be considered Islamophobic because of their unrelenting focus on Islam as the primary motivation for all Muslim behaviour.

The present chapter aims to address the question of whether Islamophobia can be considered a form of racism by an analysis of the discourse of the English Defence League (EDL), an 'anti-Islamist' street protest group that singularly focuses on Muslim activity in Britain. Despite the violence and anti-Muslim rhetoric associated with its protests, the EDL claims to be an anti-racist human rights organisation dedicated to protecting liberal freedoms and a bulwark

against 'Islamic extremism',²⁷⁷ and this claim is contained in their protest chant: 'not racist, not violent, just no longer silent.'²⁷⁸

The English Defence League emerged in 2009 as a mass street protest movement able to attract supporters in the thousands to demonstrate against 'Islamic extremism' in towns and cities across the UK. The group's paradoxical combination of antagonistic, often violent, street protest and their apparently benign intellectual output has confounded observers. The group has staged dozens of protests (including marches, static protests, and 'flash demonstrations'), which have often descended into violence as supporters broke through police lines to assault local Asians, confront counter-protesters, and attack Asian businesses and property.²⁷⁹ By September 2011 the cost of policing demonstrations was estimated to be in excess of £10 million, with more than 600 arrests made in connection with EDL protest.²⁸⁰ Despite the violence and virulent anti-Muslim rhetoric that has become associated with the group the EDL strongly denies Islamophobia, claiming to be only against 'Islamic extremism' and not all Muslims.

This chapter employs a critical methodology to address these claims, analysing EDL literature in order to isolate the group's representation of Muslims and considering these alongside strategies identified as typical of racist discourse

²⁷⁷ EDL, "EDL Mission Statement," *EDL: About Us*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/mission-statement> [Retrieved 14 January 2011].

²⁷⁸ EDL, "EDL Featured in BBC Documentary," *EDL News*, 20 February, 2012, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/239-edl-featured-in-bbc-documentary> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

²⁷⁹ Copsey, "The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality," 26.

²⁸⁰ Paul Jackson, Mark Pitchford, and Trevor Preston, "The EDL: Britain's 'New Far-Right' Social Movement," *Radicalism and New Media Research Group*, 2011, 68; 71–73, http://www.radicalism-new-media.org/images/pdf/The_EDL_Britains_New_Far_Right_Social_Movement.pdf [Retrieved 28 May 2015].

construction. The representations, narratives and rhetorical strategies employed by the group support the analysis of Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism that constructs opposing 'British' and 'Muslim' subjects and functions to maintain traditional ethno-cultural dominance of the former over the latter.

There have been a number of academic studies of the group,²⁸¹ which have focused primarily on the attitudes and ideology of EDL supporters. These studies address an important aspect of the popular appeal of the EDL, yet it is remarkable the extent to which the group's own justification for its existence and ideological position has been ignored. The present study contributes to this literature by discursively analysing publicly available texts produced by the English Defence League in order to determine the central tenets of the group's ideological representation of Muslims and analyse the claim that they are not racist.

²⁸¹ Chris Allen, "Fear and Loathing: The Political Discourse in Relation to Muslims and Islam in the British Contemporary Setting," *Contemporary British Religion and Politics* IV, no. 2 (2010): 221–236; Jamie Bartlett and Mark Littler, "Inside the EDL: Populist Politics in a Digital Age," *Demos* (London, 2011), <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/insidetheedl> [Retrieved 27 Mar 2012]; Jon Burnett, *The New Geographies of Racism: Stoke-on-Trent*, *Institute of Race Relations* (London, 2011), http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/New_geographies_racism_Stoke.pdf [Retrieved 28 November 2011]; Joel Busher, "Grassroots Activism in the English Defence League: Discourse and Public (dis)order," in *Extreme Right-Wing Political Violence and Terrorism*, ed. Max Taylor, P.M. Currie, and Donald Holbrooke (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 65–83; Copsey, "The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality"; Feldman, "From Radical-Right Islamophobia to 'Cumulative Extremism': A Paper on the Shifting Focus of Hatred"; Jon Garland and James Treadwell, "'No Surrender to the Taliban!': Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defence League," *Papers from the British Criminology Conference* 10 (2010): 19–35, http://www.britisoccrim.org/volume10/2010_PBCC_full.pdf#page=23 [Retrieved 28 November 2011]; Matthew Goodwin, "The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence League and the Counter-Jihad Challenge," *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, 2013, <http://www.openbriefing.org/docs/rootsofextremism.pdf> [Retrieved 13 May 2013]; Matthew Goodwin and Jocelyn Evans, "From Voting to Violence? Far Right Extremism in Britain," *Hope Not Hate*, 2012, [http://www.channel4.com/media/c4-news/images/voting-to-violence\(7\).pdf](http://www.channel4.com/media/c4-news/images/voting-to-violence(7).pdf) [Retrieved 20 May 2012]; Jackson, Pitchford, and Preston, "The EDL: Britain's 'New Far-Right' Social Movement"; James Treadwell, "White Riot: The English Defence League and the 2011 English Riots," *Criminal Justice Matters* 87, no. 1 (2012): 36–37; James Treadwell and Jon Garland, "Masculinity, Marginalization and Violence: A Case Study of the English Defence League," *British Journal of Criminology* 51, no. 4 (2011): 621–633.

The chapter first considers the extent to which the EDL can be considered a typical far-right group, before moving on to outline the central representations of Muslims employed by the EDL. I argue that despite their claims to the contrary, EDL Islamophobia is an example of (culturally) racist discourse. Through the demarcation of a non-Muslim in-group, presented as superior in culture and values, and a Muslim out-group, which threatened the privilege and position of the former, EDL discourse functioned ideologically to maintain traditional ethno-cultural privilege and exclude Muslims from the national community. An analysis of the articles published on the *EDL News* section of its website revealed three central narratives that make up the core of EDL discursive representation of Muslims; that Muslims were uniquely problematic, that 'Islamic ideology' was the source of these problems, and that Muslims were collectively responsible for the problems identified.

These narratives are critiqued in order to identify the contestable claims that they rest upon, before moving on to demonstrate how EDL Islamophobia functioned as a culturally racist discourse. By essentialising Muslim culture as an immutable obstacle to integration, and through strategies typical of racist discourse construction, such as denials, projection, diminutives, and positive-self/negative-other representations, the EDL rearticulated Islamophobia as anti-racism and attempted to normalise it as the natural perspective of those committed to liberal freedom. The group may not be traditionally racist, but the culturally racist discourse employed distributed privilege and laid blame along a hierarchical line through the construction of opposing and irreconcilable subjects: Muslims, who were blamed for society's ills and required to radically reform their

religion, and non-Muslims, who were presented as blameless victims of 'Islamic extremism'.

The purpose of this chapter is not to label the EDL an Islamophobic organisation, although as will be shown, it is difficult to argue that it is not. The aim instead is to show how the group constructed all Muslims as (potentially) dangerous and proposed a culturalist explanation of Muslim inferiority to bolster the representation of superior Englishness. In their representation of Muslims as uniquely problematic, EDL Islamophobia found explanatory value for all Muslim action within Islam, and demanded that traditional ethno-cultural dominance be maintained in the face of unacceptable Muslim challenges. As the analysis will show, the apparent gulf between the violent anti-Muslim rhetoric of those attending street protests on one hand, and the ostensibly reasonable and rational opposition to Islam that makes up the group's ideological core on the other, is in fact largely illusory. Both rest upon the notion that Muslims represent a perilous and existential threat to Britain, and both construct 'Muslim' and 'British' as opposing and ultimately irreconcilable identities. The EDL's insistence on the superiority of the latter demonstrates the fundamental similarity between racist discourse and Islamophobia.

The English Defence League and the far right

The English Defence League emerged in 2009 as a major 'anti-Islamist' street protest group. Formed in Luton, the group was initially comprised of a small collection of individuals on the fringes of the English football hooligan scene who objected to Islamist activity in the town. In March 2009, Ahlus Sunnah wal

Jammah, an offshoot of al-Muhajiroun, had protested at the homecoming parade of the 2nd battalion Royal Anglian Regiment, returning from a six-month tour of Iraq. After they shouted abuse at the soldiers and held up inflammatory banners reading 'baby killers' and 'butchers', the crowd turned on them, providing the spark for the formation of United People of Luton (UPL), which later became the EDL.²⁸²

UPL marched through Luton in May 2009 demanding an end to Islamist presence in the town and the interest generated led to the establishment of networks of sympathisers. Tommy Robinson (Stephen Yaxley-Lennon), who emerged as the group's *de facto* leader, stated:

When we saw Birmingham's demonstration [organised by 'British Citizens Against Muslims Extremists'] they were using the same slogans as us: 'We want our country back', 'Terrorists off the streets', 'Extremists out', 'Rule Britannia'. From there the EDL was set up.²⁸³

The group grew dramatically through social networking sites and involvement with 'Casuals United', a loose association that linked 'firms' of the English football hooligan scene,²⁸⁴ and by the end of 2010 the EDL had held more than thirty protests in cities and towns across the country and attracted supporters in the

²⁸² Copsey, "The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality," para. 1.8.

²⁸³ Robert Booth, Matthew Taylor, and Paul Lewis, "English Defence League: Chaotic Alliance Stirs up Trouble on Streets," *Guardian*, 12 September, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/11/english-defence-league-chaotic-alliance> [Retrieved 1 January 2012].

²⁸⁴ Garland and Treadwell, "'No Surrender to the Taliban!': Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defence League," 22–23.

thousands for national demonstrations in Stoke, Manchester, Dudley, Bradford, and Leicester.²⁸⁵

The group has no formal system of membership, and invites people of any political persuasion, ethnicity, race and sexuality to demonstrate under the EDL's banner. Group organisation centres on a series of area 'divisions', each directed by a regional organiser. As of 29 February 2012 there were 94 local divisions listed on the group's website.²⁸⁶ In addition to these there are a number of specialist groups, including a Jewish division, a women's division (EDL Angels), and a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) division. The existence of such groups provides the EDL with an important point of differentiation from traditional far-right groups, and sustains the group's claims to be anti-racist, liberal and tolerant.

As the movement grew, expensive security operations to police the protests and violent clashes with local Asian youth and counter protesters led to massive media coverage which questioned what the EDL hoped to achieve with their increasingly high profile demonstrations. In response the group set up a website to complement its presence on social networking sites *Twitter* and *Facebook*. *Englishdefenceleague.org* comprises a mission statement explaining the purpose of the EDL, a forum which allows sympathisers to network, and even an online shop which sells branded clothing, flags, and toys. An important section of the website is *EDL News*, which represents an effort to justify demonstrations, explain the EDL's concern with 'radical Islam', and rally supporters to its cause.

²⁸⁵ Copsey, "The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality," 27–29.

²⁸⁶ EDL, "Divisions," *English Defence League*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/divisions/?grpage=3&num=> [Retrieved 3 June 2012].

It is important to note that although *EDL News* presents the 'acceptable face' of the movement, the nature of EDL protest has often been far removed from the apparently liberal tolerance espoused on this site. The group has repeatedly stressed it is not opposed to all Muslims, only 'extremists', yet studies of demonstrations indicate that supporters have little grasp of any difference between the two. It will be shown that official EDL discourse represents all Muslims as suspiciously dangerous to British people and 'values'. At street level, however, this distinction has disappeared, with protest chants including: 'I hate Pakis more than you',²⁸⁷ 'Give me a gun and I will shoot the Muzzie scum',²⁸⁸ and 'Allah, Allah, who the fuck is Allah?'²⁸⁹ Demonstrations have often descended into violence as EDL supporters have broken through police lines to assault local Asians, confront counter-protesters, and attack Asian businesses and property.²⁹⁰ Jon Garland and James Treadwell, who have undertaken important covert ethnographic work at EDL demonstrations, have highlighted that supporters espouse a much more traditional racism than the group's leadership would be willing to admit, particularly against young Muslim males who are seen as fair targets for violent aggression.²⁹¹

Because of the amorphous structure and lack of formal membership, studies into the demographic profile and ideological motivations of EDL supporters have

²⁸⁷ Booth, Taylor, and Lewis, "English Defence League: Chaotic Alliance Stirs up Trouble on Streets."

²⁸⁸ Garland and Treadwell, "'No Surrender to the Taliban!': Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defence League," 25.

²⁸⁹ Neil Tweedie, "The English Defence League: Will the Flames of Hatred Spread?," *Telegraph*, 10 October, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/6284184/The-English-Defence-League-will-the-flames-of-hatred-spread.html> [Retrieved 23 April 2012].

²⁹⁰ Copsey, "The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality," 26.

²⁹¹ Treadwell and Garland, "Masculinity, Marginalization and Violence: A Case Study of the English Defence League," 625; Garland and Treadwell, "'No Surrender to the Taliban!': Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defence League," 29–30.

proven difficult. The only such study to date estimated that the EDL had approximately 25,000 to 35,000 active supporters, concentrated around the London area, with a higher proportion of male (81%) to female (19%) members, and an older and more educated profile than perhaps would be expected, with 28% of supporters over the age of thirty and 30% holding a university or college degree. The primary reasons cited for joining and demonstrating with the EDL were opposition to Islam or Islamism and a desire to preserve national and cultural values.²⁹²

The tactics and discourse of EDL demonstrations, as well supporters' comments on its social networking sites, have led to difficulties in conceptualising the movement. As noted, protests have often involved racist chanting and hate speech, yet the EDL's online articles consistently advocate anti-racism. The liberal tropes that infuse EDL discourse, as well as its efforts to recruit ethnic and sexual minorities, are apparently incongruous with claims that the group is simply racist. This paradox has implications for considering the group a far right organisation. Several scholars have noted that contemporary extreme right parties have sought to cast off their thuggish image and appeal more to the electorate by careful avoidance of overtly racist language.²⁹³ Is the EDL merely a new manifestation of this phenomenon? A brief comparison with Britain's most successful far right party, the British National Party (BNP), serves to illustrate that although

²⁹² Bartlett and Littler, "Inside the EDL: Populist Politics in a Digital Age," 4–6.

²⁹³ Chris Atton, "Far-Right Media on the Internet: Culture, Discourse and Power," *New Media & Society* 8, no. 4 (2006): 573–587; Roger Eatwell, "Community Cohesion and Cumulative Extremism in Contemporary Britain," *The Political Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (2006): 204–216; Matthew Goodwin, "The Extreme Right in Britain: Still an 'Ugly Duckling' but for How Long?," *The Political Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2007): 241–250; Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou, "Towards a 'Civic' Narrative: British National Identity and the Transformation of the British National Party," *The Political Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2010): 583–592; Naomi Newman, "The New Frontier of Racism," *Public Policy Research* no. June-August (2007): 80–89.

similarities exist, there are important differences which make the identification of the EDL as a far-right movement problematic.

The BNP and the EDL

While BNP and EDL ideology share surface level resemblances, these should not be overstated. Both groups focus on Islam as a central danger threatening Britain, but for the former Muslims are merely a particular symptom of the wider problem of immigration and multiculturalism. Muslims are considered racial 'others' by the BNP, lacking the white Anglo-Saxon 'liberal gene' that genetically predisposes the British to liberal democratic culture.²⁹⁴ This focus on Muslims as biologically not-British is illustrated by the party's representation of the 2005 London bombings as '...genocidal race attacks by immigrant Islamic Fascists against White Christian British people....'²⁹⁵ Similarly, the BNP's proposed solution to the problem of Islamist terrorism (closure of borders, an end to immigration, a programme of expulsion and abolishment of multiculturalism)²⁹⁶ exemplify its preoccupation with racial purity. It is true that the increased hardening of public attitudes towards Muslims has provided a platform of populist legitimacy on which the BNP has argued for its racist policies, but it is precisely this focus on race that distances it from the EDL.

In contrast, the EDL disavows crude biological determinism, and uses a more sophisticated discourse of culture to mark out Islam out as a sociological, rather

²⁹⁴ Sasha Williams and Ian Law, "Legitimising Racism: An Exploration of the Challenges Posed by the Use of Indigeneity Discourses by the Far Right," *Sociological Research Online* 17, no. 2 (2011): para. 5.7–5.8, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/17/2/2.html> [Retrieved 19 May 2013].

²⁹⁵ Wood and Finlay, "British National Party Representations of Muslims in the Month after the London Bombings: Homogeneity, Threat, and the Conspiracy Tradition," 713.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 721.

than a biological, impediment to assimilation. The movement rejects the BNP's conflation of Muslims, immigrants and non-whites, and does not concern itself with multiculturalism in general. In EDL discourse Muslims are sharply distinguished from other immigrant communities in the UK, which are looked upon favourably in comparison. In distinction to the BNP's repatriation policies, EDL solutions centre on presenting the 'real facts' about Islam to the public and the demand that Muslims reform their religion. It should also be noted that a strong vein of anti-Semitism runs through the contemporary BNP.²⁹⁷ Manifested in claims of media control and the attribution of multiculturalism to a Jewish conspiracy, this ideological pillar of the far right is certainly not shared by the EDL. With its firm support of Israel, the existence of a Jewish division within its ranks and its regular denouncement of anti-Semitism, the EDL cannot be said to subscribe to such conspiracy theories, at least regarding Jews.

In addition, ideological differences have been noted by both groups. Until recently BNP members were proscribed from attending EDL demonstrations or making links with the group,²⁹⁸ and when Tommy Robinson announced his defection from the EDL in October 2013, he claimed that the proliferation of far-right activity within the group had led to him spending 'too much time keeping goose stepping white pride morons' away from demonstrations.²⁹⁹ As Joel

²⁹⁷ Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy*, 162; John E. Richardson, "Ploughing the Same Furrow? Continuity and Change on Britain's Extreme-Right Fringe," in *Right Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, ed. Ruth Wodak, Majid KhosraviNik, and Brigitte Mral (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 107–109.

²⁹⁸ Nick Griffin, "An Opportunity to Be Seized - Why We Have Lifted the Proscription on the English Defence League," *BNP News*, 25 February, 2012, <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/opportunity-be-seized-why-we-have-lifted-proscription-english-defence-league> [Retrieved 24 February 2015].

²⁹⁹ See: BBC, "EDL Leader Tommy Robinson Quits Group," *BBC News*, 8 October, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24442953> [Retrieved 17 February 2015]. Tommy Robinson's reason for leaving was quoted on the homepage of the EDL website shortly after his defection: 'I need to make it clear that I left the EDL because I was spending too much time

Busher has argued, being anti-racist is an important element of identity construction for EDL activists,³⁰⁰ and the consistent rejection of BNP advances are a point of pride for the movement.³⁰¹ Although there are reasons to be cautious about future directions, particularly with regard to the type of supporter it potentially attracts and the malleability of the group's ideology, at this point in its history there are clearly marked and profound differences between the EDL and the established far right. The English Defence League does not biologically racialize the threat from Islam or blame multiculturalism and immigration for the 'Muslim problem' it perceives, and the ends sought are far removed from the repatriation policies advocated by the BNP.

One reason the EDL has been categorised within the far right is that previous studies have concentrated predominantly on the attitudes and ideology of supporters. These have included examinations of the nature and threat of EDL protest,³⁰² studies highlighting the demographic profile of self-identified members,³⁰³ and ethnographic studies which have investigated the discourse and ideology of EDL supporters.³⁰⁴ While there is demonstrable need for more work on this topic, this chapter is not concerned with the attitudes of supporters, and

trying to keep goose-stepping white pride morons away from our demos and not enough time actually doing anything to stop the advance of Islamic extremism. I wanted to make sure our legitimate concerns were not ignored because Nazi morons destroyed our voice in mainstream politics and media.' EDL, "English Defence League," *EDL Homepage*, 30 October, 2013.

³⁰⁰ Busher, "Grassroots Activism in the English Defence League: Discourse and Public (dis)order," 68.

³⁰¹ EDL, "Suspensions Raised about Nationalist Demonstration on 8th October... And Neo-Nazi Named and Shamed," *EDL News*, 19 September, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/138-suspensions-raised-about-nationalist-demonstration-on-8th-october-and-neo-nazi-named-and-shamed> [Retrieved 1 March 2013].

³⁰² Allen, "Fear and Loathing: The Political Discourse in Relation to Muslims and Islam in the British Contemporary Setting"; Burnett, *The New Geographies of Racism: Stoke-on-Trent*.

³⁰³ Bartlett and Littler, "Inside the EDL: Populist Politics in a Digital Age"; Goodwin and Evans, "From Voting to Violence? Far Right Extremism in Britain."

³⁰⁴ Busher, "Grassroots Activism in the English Defence League: Discourse and Public (dis)order"; Treadwell and Garland, "Masculinity, Marginalization and Violence: A Case Study of the English Defence League"; Garland and Treadwell, "'No Surrender to the Taliban!': Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defence League"; Goodwin, "The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence League and the Counter-Jihad Challenge."

focuses instead on what may be termed the official ideology of the English Defence League.

There are significant differences between the EDL's stated ideology and the concerns of those who claim ideological affinity with the group. Previous studies have suggested that anti-Islam prejudice accounts for only one part of supporters' concerns.³⁰⁵ Matthew Goodwin, for example, found that those who agreed with the ideals and/or methods of the EDL were more likely to be authoritarian and xenophobic, and held more negative attitudes towards immigration and ethnic minority groups.³⁰⁶ In contrast, it is striking the extent to which the issue of immigration is ignored by the EDL in its official material. Only two of 117 *EDL News* articles discussed immigration, and neither politicised the issue, stating only that the government's approach had been 'seriously flawed',³⁰⁷ but: 'Just because the government has been far too focused on the advantages of immigration (without consideration of the possible problems), is no reason to forget the advantages altogether.'³⁰⁸ Indeed, in contrast to the generalised xenophobia and opposition to immigration espoused by supporters, some articles specifically argued against this, stating the benefits of immigration to Britain³⁰⁹ and emphasising positive aspects of cultural diversity.³¹⁰ In the pages of *EDL*

³⁰⁵ Bartlett and Littler, "Inside the EDL: Populist Politics in a Digital Age"; Goodwin, "The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence League and the Counter-Jihad Challenge."

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 8–11.

³⁰⁷ EDL, "99% of Daily Star Respondents Support the EDL," *EDL News*, 1 December, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/178-99-of-daily-star-respondents-support-the-edl> [Retrieved 1 March 2013].

³⁰⁸ EDL, "Suspensions Raised about Nationalist Demonstration on 8th October... And Neo-Nazi Named and Shamed."

³⁰⁹ EDL, "What Does It Mean to Be Asian?," *EDL News*, 22 August, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/116-what-does-it-mean-to-be-asian> [Retrieved 28 February 2012]; EDL, "Suspensions Raised about Nationalist Demonstration on 8th October... And Neo-Nazi Named and Shamed."

³¹⁰ EDL, "Open Letter to Leicester Businesses," *EDL News*, 25 January, 2012, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/194-open-letter-to-leicester-businesses> [Retrieved 1 March 2012]; EDL, "The English Defence League: The Leading Force against Far-Right Extremism

News, immigration and multiculturalism are not in themselves problematic: '... it is not multiculturalism, but Islam, that has failed.'³¹¹ While supporters may hold generalised anti-immigration prejudice, official EDL discourse either ignores or specifically argues against this.

It is important, therefore, to emphasise ideological variance between the movement and its supporters. The group operates as an umbrella organisation for anyone who wishes to demonstrate against 'Islamic extremism', and those who protest under its banner will surely have additional anxieties. The EDL itself, however, quite consciously shuns wider issues to focus exclusively on Islam. To some extent, these differences afford the group an element of plausible deniability against charges of racism, Islamophobia and extremism. The fact that the EDL has no formal structure of membership and exists as an organisation to which people are affiliated (and can therefore become dis-affiliated) is advantageous, since those using overtly racist language at protests or on its social networking sites can be dismissed as outside agitators; since the EDL is avowedly anti-racist why would racists want to join its protests?³¹² This rhetorical question underlines the need to analyse the official discourse of the group. Why, indeed, are those with the attitudes described by Goodwin attracted to the EDL?

Since the EDL claims to have no interest in electoral politics it does not produce pamphlets explaining its purpose and goals. In the absence of such platforms, the only texts which elucidate the group's official ideology are the articles which make up the *EDL News* section of the website

in the UK," *EDL News*, 27 July, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/93-the-english-defence-league-the-leading-force-against-far-right-extremism-in-the-uk> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³¹¹ EDL, "The English Defence League - Standing Firm," *EDL News*, 6 August, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/101-the-english-defence-league-standing-firm> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³¹² Ibid.

englishdefenceleague.org. These represent an effort to justify demonstrations, deflect negative media attention, explain the EDL's concern with 'radical Islam', and rally supporters to its cause. Links to these articles are provided on the group's *Facebook* and *Twitter* pages, and consequently every online follower receives regular exposure to this material on their social network newsfeed. As the EDL's internet popularity soars,³¹³ an analysis of its ideological representation of Muslims is crucial.

The discourse of *EDL News*

EDL News contains articles and commentary, as well as information for forthcoming demonstrations and campaigns. As of 29 February 2012 there were a total of 117 publicly available articles, 86 of which discussed Muslims and/or Islam and formed the corpus for further analysis. These articles were subjected to predicate analysis, which focused on the ideational collocates of the nouns 'Islam' and 'Muslim' in order to determine central narratives, frames and themes.³¹⁴ This step identified three consistently recurring narratives. First, Muslims were seen as uniquely problematic, posing a distinctive threat to British people and to 'British values'. Second, the problems caused by Muslims were thought to be traceable to Islam itself: through scripture, the example of the Prophet and 'Islamic ideology'. Finally, Muslims were held collectively responsible, for both the actions of their co-religionists and the reform of Islam. By failing to

³¹³ Matthew Goodwin, "Woolwich Attack and the Far Right: Three Points to Consider When the Dust Settles," *Guardian*, 23 May, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/may/23/woolwich-attack-far-right-three-points> [Retrieved 23 May 2013].

³¹⁴ John E. Richardson, "'Get Shot of the Lot of Them': Election Reporting of Muslims in British Newspapers," *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3–4 (2009): 360.

speak out against fellow Muslims and root out problematic individuals within their communities, the EDL claimed that Muslims had abandoned their responsibilities and must therefore be coerced into reform.

These narratives appeared consistently, regardless of which topic a particular article focused on, suggesting that they form the core of EDL ideological representation of Muslims. The final part of the analysis followed a critical methodology,³¹⁵ where each narrative was subjected to a first order critique, in order to identify contradictions, myths and misrepresentations, and a second order critique, which considered the ideological effects of EDL discourse, through a comparison of rhetorical strategies with those identified as typical of racist discourse construction.

Taking each narrative in turn, the chapter proceeds by identifying how Muslims were problematized by the EDL and critically examining these claims, before moving on to consider the rhetorical strategies employed and demonstrate how EDL discourse functioned ideologically as a form of racial discourse.

Narrating Islamophobia: Central themes of EDL representation of Muslims and Islam

Muslims as uniquely problematic

The EDL presented Muslims as a unique and exclusive threat to Britain. In addition to the recycling of negative topics across the articles (extremism,

³¹⁵ Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," 397.

terrorism, etc.), within-text repetition of Muslim deviance served to indicate the conviction that society's problems could be laid at Islam's door:

The biggest threat to British Muslims isn't 'Islamophobia', it's the extremism that thrives [with]in the Muslim community – the embrace of violent and anti-democratic means, the intolerance, the separatism, the attacks on homosexuals and Jews, the hatred of 'the West', and the continued hosting of radical preachers.³¹⁶

... [the] problems associated with the Muslim Community are [not] just down to a few bearded lunatics. If we're to put an end to "home-grown" terrorism, so-called "honour-killings", child grooming (which, sadly, is dominated by Muslim men), the preaching of extremism on our streets and in British Mosques, and all of the other problems that stem from the Muslim Community, then we can't be afraid to make serious and considered criticisms.³¹⁷

These repeated lists of negative behaviour were presented as the exclusive reserve of Muslims. The most common activities highlighted were extremism and terrorism; however Muslims were also associated with violence more broadly. Two cases in particular serve to highlight how local incidents were used by the group to further their agenda: the case of Rhea Page, who was attacked in Leicester by a group of Somali women in June 2010; and the assault of Daniel Stringer-Prince in February 2012 by a group of Asian youths in Hyde, Greater Manchester. In response to these incidents the EDL organised demonstrations

³¹⁶ EDL, "British Muslims Support the Poppy Appeal," *EDL News*, 14 November, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/163-british-muslims-support-the-poppy-appeal> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³¹⁷ EDL, "EDL Featured in BBC Documentary."

against 'Islamic extremism' in both Leicester and Hyde (in the latter case against the family's wishes). *EDL News* justification of the demonstrations, as well as speeches made at the rallies, explicitly connected Islam to the violence, despite there being no demonstrable link in either case between the religious background of the offenders and the attacks:

Islamic extremism is barely out of the news, and neither is the self-imposed segregation of the Muslim community, or the intolerance and religious supremacism that, unfortunately, so often goes with it. In this context, isn't it reasonable to ask whether Daniel was likely to have been attacked not because of his skin colour, but because he was non-Muslim?³¹⁸

In the Stringer-Prince case the religious background of the assailants was not clear,³¹⁹ and though the Rhea Page case was complicated by the possibility that it was racially aggravated (the attackers shouted 'white bitch' as they assaulted her³²⁰), that she had been targeted as a non-Muslim was never suggested by police or the prosecution. In justifying their demonstration against the 'two tier' justice system that had handed suspended sentences to Page's attackers, reportedly because they were Somali Muslims not used to drinking alcohol, the EDL nevertheless suggested that, given the supremacist beliefs of Muslims, Page may have been targeted as a non-believer:

³¹⁸ EDL, "Successful Demo in Hyde (and No, We're Not Paying for It)," *EDL News*, 29 February, 2012, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/255-successful-demo-in-hyde-and-no-we?re-not-paying-for-it> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³¹⁹ Helen Carter, "Man Held over Alleged Race Hate Attack," *Guardian*, 7 February, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/feb/07/alleged-race-hate-attack-hyde> [3 June 2012].

³²⁰ Telegraph, "Muslim Women Not Used to Drinking Walk Free after Attack on Woman. 6 Dec.," *Telegraph*, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8937856/Muslim-women-not-used-to-drinking-walk-free-after-attack-on-woman.html> [Retrieved 3 June 2012].

Somali Muslims might not be used to alcohol, but if they're members of the religion of peace, then surely they should be uniquely placed to know that violence is wrong? Or is it not too bad when it's aimed at the non-believers?³²¹

These incidents demonstrate the contentious nature of the 'facts' employed by the EDL, and show how tenuous associations between the supposed background of the attackers and their violent behaviour were made on the basis of assumptions.

The EDL used the example of other minorities to illustrate the uniquely problematic nature of Muslims, claiming that the former had integrated within the national community without difficulty. By stressing the 'seamless integration' of other minorities, the EDL emphasised the unique challenges posed by Muslims whilst simultaneously neutralising possible objections that racist attitudes had hampered Muslim integration:

... there have never been any problems with Sikh integration in this country... Sikhs have shown an impressive willingness to integrate, to accept the laws of the land, and to confront and defeat any form of extremism.³²²

³²¹ EDL, "A Two-Tier System," *EDL News*, 11 December, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/181-a-two-tier-system> [Retrieved 28 February 2012].

³²² EDL, "What Does It Mean to Be Asian?"

There are no Buddhist suicide bombers. There are no Christian suicide bombers. There are no Jain suicide bombers. There are only Islamic suicide bombers. Murderous jihadists exist wherever there are Muslims...³²³

This narrative is deeply ideological, and disregards the long history of struggle in which minority communities have engaged to have their cultures and customs recognised. The suggestion that Sikhs had been unconditionally accepted by British society overlooked the protracted struggle to be allowed to carry the *kirpan* (ceremonial dagger), as well as the turban disputes at work (and for motorcyclists), both of which resulted in national debates about Sikh's ability to integrate.³²⁴ The threat to social cohesion and national identity posed by black communities has also been a recurring theme of national debate,³²⁵ and such ideas still hold currency today, as demonstrated by the discussions around the 2011 English riots, which singled out 'black culture' as a major contributory factor.³²⁶ The fact that these debates are far from settled in the 21st century illustrates the EDL's deliberate distortion of history, both of minority communities and their acceptance into the national community.

Having identified the major problems in British society as stemming from one particular 'community', the explanation for such behaviour was situated in the shared 'ideology' that was believed to inspire it. Islam was identified by the EDL

³²³ EDL, "The Cultic and Beastly Nature of Islam," *EDL News*, 10 July, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/70-the-cultic-beastly-nature-of-islam> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³²⁴ Eleanor Nesbitt, "Sikh Diversity in the UK: Context and Evolution," in *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 227.

³²⁵ M. Christian, "The Politics of Black Presence in Britain and Black Male Exclusion in the British Education System," *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 3 (2005): 327–346.

³²⁶ David Barrett, "Historian Starkey in 'Racism' Row over Riot Comments," *Telegraph*, 15 August, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8700109/Historian-Starkey-in-racism-row-over-riot-comments.html> [Retrieved 3 June 2012].

as the crucial causal factor that provided Muslims with motive and justification for their behaviour.

The problematic nature of 'Islamic ideology'

The EDL explained perceived Muslim over-representation in anti-social behaviour by referring to Islamic teaching. Scripture was believed to sanction such activities, and this was illustrated with selective and de-contextualised passages from the Qur'an. Islam was regarded as the rationale for all Muslim action, and thus the source of the problems identified. Considered intrinsically Muslim problems, extremism and terrorism were represented as embedded within the religion:

The primary cause [of terrorism] is right in front of us. It's simple. It's what Islamic terrorists and Islamists have in common. That's right, it begins with an I.³²⁷

The suicide bombers are always described as being good or devout Muslims. Hey, you think Islam itself could be a problem?³²⁸

The influence that Islamic teaching had on other criminal activities was also highlighted, and in this context the EDL's analysis of the Rochdale and West Midlands child-grooming scandals merits close attention. The group claimed that Muslims were over-represented in these crimes, and argued that the sexual

³²⁷ EDL, "Birmingham Demonstration: October 29th," *EDL News*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/birmingham-demonstration-october-29th/> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³²⁸ EDL, "The Cultic and Beastly Nature of Islam."

exploitation of young (white) girls could be traced to Islamic scripture, which promoted the inferiority of non-Muslims and thus made them acceptable targets:

... many Muslim men see little wrong with applying the example of the prophet (sex with young children) to those who they regard as "dirty kuffar" (non-Muslims, not worthy of the same rights as Muslims under the Sharia - Islamic Law).³²⁹

Tommy [Robinson] singled out the example of the prophet Mohammed as particularly worthy of criticism. Here was a man whose history is hotly contested, but who Islamic scripture itself describes as a murderer and rapist who had sexual intercourse with a girl of 9 (or younger according to some sources). And yet Muslims are still taught that their prophet set a perfect example for them to follow.³³⁰

The group's assertion that these were Muslim crimes was based on the Pakistani heritage of the majority of the perpetrators. The extent to which the men involved were practising Muslims is unknown, and any notion that 'Islamic supremacism' may have fuelled their activities was not reported. Nevertheless, as with the cases of Rhea Page and Daniel Stringer-Prince, the EDL were confident enough to demonstrate outside court at both hearings in order to protest the 'Islamic extremism' they claimed had resulted in these crimes. The idea that members of 'Muslim child grooming' gangs were 'Islamic extremists' stretched the term beyond recognition. Men who plied young girls with alcohol and exploited them for sexual gratification were clearly not following any

³²⁹ EDL, "What Does It Mean to Be Asian?"

³³⁰ EDL, "Islam: The Religion of Peace?," *EDL News*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/islam-the-religion-of-peace/> [Retrieved 28 February 2012].

interpretation of the Qur'an, extreme or otherwise, and sexual offences can hardly be deemed a 'Muslim' problem. The fact that 85% of sex offenders in the UK are white men³³¹ has not led the EDL to deeply question the ideological foundations upon which masculinity is constructed, yet the assumed Muslim background of the perpetrators in these cases was focused upon as if it had explanatory value.

Muslims' supposed self-segregation was also represented by the EDL as traceable to Islamic teaching, which was deemed to undermine the ties of national identity. These culturally conditioned anti-integration tendencies were believed to not only preclude peaceful co-existence, but were also presented as exemplary of a general, scripturally sanctioned desire to colonize all social spaces:

... [within Islam] an ideology has developed that believes that there can be no loyalty to anyone or anything other than Islam...³³²

... a picture emerges of an ideology that is commanded not to integrate with others. It's an ideology whose followers are commanded to wage war. Whether it's physical, cultural, economic, social or political warfare, it's incumbent upon all Muslims to follow the example of Mohammad.³³³

Islam itself, devoid of distinction between 'ordinary' and 'radical' practitioners, was clearly considered by the EDL to be the problem. All Muslims were therefore seen as potentially prone to such behaviour. The understanding that scripture

³³¹ Crown Prosecution Service, *Violence against Women and Girls: Crime Report 2010-2011, Area*, 2011, http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/CPS_VAW_report_2011.pdf [Retrieved 28 May 2012].

³³² EDL, "The Rise of the British Taliban," *EDL News*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/the-rise-of-the-british-taliban/> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³³³ EDL, "Islam: The Religion of Peace?"

provided the rationale for Muslim criminality endorsed the conviction that Islam was inherently dangerous to British society. As a consequence every Muslim, indeed every person with a Muslim background or name, was considered suspicious and (potentially) guilty by association. Accordingly, nothing less than total reform of Islam was demanded.

Muslims as responsible for reforming their religion

The EDL stressed that all Muslims shared responsibility for the ills they identified, and therefore must make efforts not only to root out those engaged in such behaviours but also to make Islam more acceptable through reform. Because such efforts (if they had been made at all) were considered to have failed, the EDL contended that Muslims had shown themselves unwilling to make the changes demanded of them, and their commitment to 'British values' was questioned. Muslims were deemed to have wilfully ignored thriving extremism in their midst, complaining about discrimination and those who insulted Islam rather than addressing the *Islamic* root of such behaviour and making efforts to prevent radicalisation:

Islamic extremism is an Islamic problem, and the Muslim community needs to get its house in order.³³⁴

... [it is] Islam that has a problem with extremism. And this should entail certain responsibilities. It should mean that there is a clear need for reform.³³⁵

³³⁴ EDL, "Tommy Robinson Vs. Weyman Bennett," *EDL News*, 26 October, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/158-tommy-robinson-vs-weyman-bennett> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

For the EDL, Muslims had failed to stem the tide of negative behaviour within their communities because they did not see the need, or have the will, to take action. The group claimed that Muslims were shirking their responsibilities and attempting to deflect attention from their failures by remonstrating about discrimination instead of tackling difficult issues:

WAKE UP CALL – Muslims, it is up to YOU to sort out these problems... You cannot moan about being treated with suspicion when you do nothing to deal with those extremists within your communities.³³⁶

Muslim community leaders often appear not to have noticed any Islamic extremism at all. They consistently refuse to accept any portion of blame...³³⁷

The willingness of Muslims to protest when Islam was offended was compared with the 'silence' when 'British liberal values' were contravened. The EDL again highlighted Islam's distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim as the basis for this perceived double standard:

... the Muslim community often seems unwilling to make the effort to seriously combat the extremism within its midst. Cartoonist draws Mohammed - angry Muslims on the street. Muslims kill innocent people in the name of Islam - relative silence.³³⁸

³³⁵ EDL, "Speeches from the Birmingham Demonstration," *EDL News*, 1 November, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/160-speeches-from-the-birmingham-demonstration> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³³⁶ EDL, "Life in the UK Is Generally Pretty Good," *EDL News*, 10 November, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/167-life-in-the-uk-is-generally-pretty-good> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³³⁷ EDL, "National Demonstration: 25th February 2012, Hyde, Greater Manchester."

³³⁸ EDL, "Tommy Robinson Vs. Weyman Bennett."

Did we see Muslims worldwide protesting against those actions [9/11 and 7/7], or celebrating them? Those friendly neighbourhood Muslims we all know did nothing, because they will never condemn a Muslim “brother”, yet another teaching from the Koran.³³⁹

The allegation that Muslim leaders had failed to undermine extremist ideas from an Islamic perspective was considered evidence that Muslims were evading their responsibilities and, through their silence, providing implicit support for such ideas.

The contention that Muslims had not addressed these issues deliberately disregarded the myriad voices that have condemned violence and terrorism over the past decade. To mention just a few: Pakistani religious scholar Dr Tahir il-Qadri, who, in March 2010, issued a 600 page *fatwa* against terrorism and extremism, rebutting every Islamic justification used by al-Qaeda;³⁴⁰ the *Minhaj-ul-Quran* International peace conference at Wembley arena, organised to mark the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, which had an attendance of 12,000 and included a range of Muslim speakers who all unequivocally denounced terrorism;³⁴¹ the ‘*jihad* against violence’ campaign by British Muslim women’s group *Inspire* which aimed to ideologically and practically combat violence (particularly against women) justified in the name of Islam;³⁴² and the Muslim Council of Britain’s repeated condemnations of Islam inspired

³³⁹ EDL, “Life in the UK Is Generally Pretty Good.”

³⁴⁰ Dominic Casciani, “Islamic Scholar Tahir Ul-Qadri Issues Terrorism Fatwa,” *BBC*, 2 March, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8544531.stm> [Retrieved 31 May 2012].

³⁴¹ Press Association, “UK Muslims Cheer for Global Peace.,” *Guardian*, 24 September, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/feedarticle/9863616> [Retrieved 31 May 2012].

³⁴² Haroon Siddique, “Muslim Women’s Group Launches ‘Jihad against Violence’.,” *Guardian*, 6 June, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/jun/06/muslim-womens-group-jihad-violence> [Retrieved 31 May 2012].

terrorism.³⁴³ These few examples illustrate that diverse Muslim organisations have recognised the need to tackle extremist ideas, and were willing to take on the challenge. The EDL's insistence that Islam *was* the source of extremism and violence rendered these voices meaningless.

The perception that Muslims had failed to confront extremism led the EDL to suggest that a pool of support for 'extremist' ideas must exist:

We're always told that this silent majority reject extremism, but if that is the case then why are they so silent? We can think of three possible reasons: either they do not really reject extremism, they are terrified of speaking out against the radicals, or they do not feel any need to press for reform.³⁴⁴

The group considered Muslim rejection of extremism disingenuous, and implied this was due to insincerity and lack of will. Pointing to 'Islamic extremist' groups such as *al-Muhajiroun*, the EDL claimed that if Muslims were serious about eradicating extremism such groups would not exist. The actions of *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jammah* at the Royal Anglian Regiment homecoming parade was used to support this contention, and portrayed as exemplary of thriving extremism and evidence that Muslim words were empty. Yet the EDL's analysis of this incident, in its assumption that these actions were religiously motivated, discounted the intrinsically *political* nature of the act. *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jammah* may have protested as an Islamic group, using religious language and symbolism in their

³⁴³ Muhammad Abdul Bari, "Statement from the Muslim Council of Britain on Recent Terrorism.," *Muslim Council of Britain*, 3 July, 2007, http://www.mcb.org.uk/features/features.php?ann_id=1617 [Retrieved 31 May 2012]; Muslim Council of Britain, "MCB Expresses Total Condemnation of Terrorist Attacks.," *Muslim Council of Britain*, 11 September, 2001, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/media/pr/110901.htm> [Retrieved 31 May 2012]; Muslim Council of Britain, "British Muslims Utterly Condemn Acts of Terror.," *Muslim Council of Britain*, 12 July, 2005, http://www.mcb.org.uk/features/features.php?ann_id=1046 [Retrieved 31 May 2012].

³⁴⁴ EDL, "British Muslims Support the Poppy Appeal."

demonstration, but the protest was essentially political. The religious discourse of the protesters was incidental to their central message; opposition to the Iraq war and the actions there of British soldiers and the British government.

The conviction that 'extremism' was thriving, along with the belief that Muslim pledges to fight it were insincere, led to the conclusion that there must be widespread support for such ideas within Muslim communities. The EDL chose to accept the rhetoric of 'extremist' groups as representative; concluding that if such groups could religiously justify their claims there must be a large number of less vocal Muslims with the same ideas. By blaming Muslims for the ills identified, the group's assertion that Islam must be reformed, through coercion if necessary, had a semblance of legitimacy.

The themes identified above form the spine of the EDL's official ideological position, which professed to identify problematic elements in British society (Muslims), isolated the root and source of these problems (primarily Islam, but also Muslims' unwillingness to reform), and proposed possible solutions (pressure on Muslims). The adaptability of such an ideology to a wide range of situations is evident, and the EDL has used this to justify its own existence as well as the numerous protests and campaigns it has organised. However, it is equally apparent that the facts upon which these narratives are based are highly contestable. As the above critique has demonstrated, EDL ideology relies heavily upon distortion and the recycling of myths to explain the problems that the group associates with Muslims.

However, it is important to note that Islamophobia exists as a functional ideology beyond its explanatory purpose: on one hand it attempts to explain who

is responsible for any given problem; on the other, this representation of Muslims serves to delineate the contours of British identity. The following section considers how rhetorical strategies within EDL discourse shaped shared mental representations of Muslims as an existential threat to British identity, whilst simultaneously bolstering 'British values' and the EDL's claim to them.

The ideological effects of EDL discourse

The English Defence League not only put forward the case that Muslims and Islam were to blame for the various problems identified, but also used a range of rhetorical strategies to construct two opposing subjects: 'British' and 'Muslim'. These supposedly irreconcilable identities were then used by the group to contain challenges to the traditional ethno-cultural dominance of non-Muslims over Muslims. The discussion that follows delineates these strategies in order to demonstrate how the EDL presented Muslims as intrinsically and inescapably not-British, and in doing so were able to represent British identity and values as superior.

EDL discourse repeatedly employed positive-self and negative-other representation to show that deviant Muslims were breaking well established British norms. This was evident not only from the extensive negative topics across the texts, but also within-text rhetorical strategies. An important part of this strategy is the denial of prejudice,³⁴⁵ and the EDL achieved this by marking a distinction between 'ordinary Muslims' and 'Islamic extremists' and claiming to

³⁴⁵ Berry and Bonilla-Silva, "'They Should Hire the One with the Best Score': White Sensitivity to Qualification Differences in Affirmative Action Hiring Decisions," 237; T. A. van Dijk, "Discourse and Racism," *Discourse & Society* 10, no. 2 (1999): 150–151.

oppose only the latter. That this distinction continually broke down, as the group identified Muslim culture and Islamic scripture as the source of all problems, did not reduce the efficacy of the strategy. By claiming to have no problem with ordinary Muslims, the EDL could discursively operate in a territory of apparently legitimate concerns.

In their positive self-representation the EDL laid claim to British tolerance and convivial values. The integration of other minority groups was represented as an account of British acceptance and hospitality, which simultaneously portrayed Muslims as rejecting integration and testing the boundaries of acceptability with their persistent demands. The EDL's commitment to liberalism functioned in much the same way. Through its claim to welcome all races, faiths, and political persuasions, including 'moderate' Muslims, the group presented itself as embodying British liberal values. Muslims who rejected the EDL could therefore be dismissed as 'extremist', since rejecting the group was a rejection of the values it claimed to embody.

The claim that Muslims were making unreasonable demands that exceeded the cultural tolerance of British society further emphasised this positive-self/negative-other representation. This rhetorical strategy is linked to the power relations of racist discourse,³⁴⁶ where the majority group considers itself at liberty to decide whether demands are reasonable or unreasonable and marks the limits of tolerance in order to determine whether the out-group has transgressed the boundaries of social acceptability. This found expression in the discourse of the EDL's campaigns against mosques, which implicitly drew upon the notion that the

³⁴⁶ Augoustinos and Every, "The Language of race and Prejudice: A Discourse of Denial, Reason, and Liberal-Practical Politics," 126.

dominant (non-Muslim) group was entitled to decide the number of 'necessary' mosques and the range of views that were allowed to be expressed within them. The EDL's belief that, as part of the majority group, it had the right to police and challenge Muslim behaviour reflected its desire to preserve the traditional ethno-cultural dominance of British society against Muslim demands for religious recognition.

Projection strategies were used to assert that Muslims had a superiority complex, with almost a fifth of the articles discussing 'Islamic supremacism'. This projection of cultural racism onto Muslims represented them as violating established egalitarian norms, whilst simultaneously casting non-Muslims as victims. The discourse of white victimhood has been highlighted by scholars of contemporary racial ideology,³⁴⁷ who note that those espousing this discourse share an ideological world in which equality legislation has erased discrimination. Claims by minorities that they are victims of discrimination are thus met with scepticism and viewed as attempts to use their race to gain advantages ('playing the race card').

The EDL's assertion of the inherently supremacist nature of Islam meant that Muslim actions were considered expressions of this supremacism. Mosques were thus deemed symbolic of Muslim desires to dominate, increasingly available *halal* meat was seen as evidence of the 'creeping Islamification' of Britain, and Muslim political participation was viewed with deep suspicion as entrism and an attempt to expand the reach of Islam within the British political system. Muslims were believed to be culturally colonising the UK, and the EDL claimed that non-Muslims

³⁴⁷ Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, and Embrick, "'I Did Not Get That Job Because of a Black Man...': The Story Lines and Testimonies of Color-Blind Racism," 567–568; Feagin, Vera, and Batur, *White Racism*, 189–194.

were, and would increasingly be, disadvantaged and victimised as a result. This projection of supremacist motivation thus formed the basis for EDL counter-mobilisation against Muslim demands, ideologically formulated as a fight for equal treatment.³⁴⁸

A further strategy was the presentation of views as reflecting external reality rather than internal psychology. Racist discourse entails an outlook in which negative perceptions of minorities are articulated not as irrational fears, but as factually grounded in the out-group's transgression of norms.³⁴⁹ Islamophobia works in much the same way. The EDL's preoccupation with Muslims was explained as a natural reaction to their negative behaviour, a consequence of living in proximity that politicians and the 'liberal elite', whose lives were far removed from the 'Islamic ghettos', could not possibly understand. The English Defence League constantly referred to itself as a *symptom* of 'Islamic extremism', and stated that if the government could be trusted to tackle it there would be no need for the EDL. The contention that the EDL is merely the consequence of unacceptable Muslim behaviour is an ideological claim which naturalises Islamophobia as a reasonable reaction, rather than a prejudicial ideology, and effectively blames Muslims for anti-Muslim sentiment.

'Denials' ('I'm not racist but...') function in racist discourse to present a positive self-image of tolerance and reasonableness.³⁵⁰ The EDL employed this rhetorical strategy in its refutation of Islamophobia, ridiculing and dismissing it as the paranoid fantasies of Muslims, who should be directing their energies towards

³⁴⁸ Ashley Doane, "What Is Racism? Racial Discourse and Racial Politics," *Critical Sociology* 32, no. 2 (2006): 269.

³⁴⁹ Augoustinos and Every, "The Language of race and Prejudice: A Discourse of Denial, Reason, and Liberal-Practical Politics," 127.

³⁵⁰ T.A. van Dijk, "Discourse and the Denial of Racism," *Discourse & Society* 3, no. 1 (1992): 91–92.

rooting out extremists. Islamophobia, conceptualised as an irrational fear, was believed to be nonsensical and the group insisted that no one in the EDL had a 'mental illness' that would prejudice them against Muslims.³⁵¹ This reduction of Islamophobia to individual prejudice served to deflect accusations of bigotry, however, as the discourse and narratives employed by the EDL demonstrate, Islamophobia is much more than this. Far from being merely a negative assessment of Islam and a fear of individual Muslims, it is cultural racism: an ideological discourse that demarcates an in-group and an out-group and presents the former as superior and its privilege endangered.

Etienne Balibar has argued that culture may have replaced biology in new racism but, predicated on a fear of the 'other' and giving rise to an identical denial of rights, the ideological underpinnings remain the same.³⁵² The EDL constantly represented culture as a bounded and naturalised sociological signifier, and characterised Muslims as the bearers of an innate and opposing Islamic culture which could not be absorbed into Britain unless Islam was entirely reformed. The assumption that integration must be one-way and on the terms of the dominant group was implicitly an expression of the superiority of 'British culture', and the constant refrain that Muslims held unacceptable and inassimilable values contained a denial of the right to challenge 'traditional values' as British citizens. While the EDL instrumentalised 'British values' for decidedly illiberal ends in order to vehemently criticise Islam, the reverse would be unthinkable. Muslims were constrained by the discourse to such an extent that

³⁵¹ EDL, "Tommy Robinson Challenges David Cameron to a Live Debate," *EDL News*, 30 August, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/edl-news-2/122-tommy-robinson-challenges-david-cameron-to-a-live-debate> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

³⁵² Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?", 83–84.

any conception of the social good expressed in religious terms would be considered exemplary of latent extremism.

The deeply ideological nature of EDL discursive representation of Muslims supports the conceptualisation of Islamophobia as cultural racism, working on one hand to preserve traditional ethno-cultural dominance and privilege, and on the other to contain challenges to this dominance, believed to stem primarily from Muslim communities. The representation of Muslims by the EDL reproduced and sustained the cultural dominance of non-Muslims over Muslims based on a set of 'British values' that the latter were thought to violate, and the right of the bearers of these values to decide the boundaries of tolerance and police the behaviour of others.

While there have been few studies of the EDL at this early stage of its development, those available have highlighted the pessimism of its supporters, their view that England is entering a period of decline, and the belief that white working class men (of which the EDL is predominately composed) are being disadvantaged in comparison to other groups.³⁵³ The attraction of a discourse that identifies Muslims as responsible for perceived social decay is not surprising if supporters feel that the traditional power and sense of superiority of white communities is dissipating in the face of the demands of other groups. EDL street protest has the psychological benefit of alleviating feelings of inferiority and marginalisation through a performative masculinity that involves a show of strength and solidarity and the possibility of violent confrontation as a way to

³⁵³ Bartlett and Littler, "Inside the EDL: Populist Politics in a Digital Age," 30–32.

work out problems.³⁵⁴ In this sense the group performs an important function as a means of expressing discontent, erasing its supporters' feelings of despair and transforming them from passive into active subjects. The EDL thus affirms a certain kind of white working class identity, and demands that it be recognised and acknowledged as an heir to the historical privileges of the dominant (white) group.

The analysis of Islamophobia as an affective prejudice (a *fear* of Islam or Muslims) has led to difficulties of conceptualisation that the EDL have gleefully exploited in their dismissal of the term as nonsense. Yet, if we retreat from the notion that Islamophobia is an individual negative attitude, and instead consider it a shared social narrative, its ideological usefulness becomes more apparent. Islamophobia has currency enough to motivate thousands to take to the streets, and tens of thousands to claim some affinity to the EDL because, like all racial discourse, it has ideological value. In its explanation of social problems as resulting from cultural deviance, Islamophobia not only identifies Muslims as problematic, but also relieves the rest of society of responsibility. The EDL's constant chastisement of Muslims, whether for their lack of will or success in tackling extremism, or their failure to see that it is *their* problem, reflects the group's belief that the rest of British society bears no responsibility. Islamophobia has ideological appeal precisely because it finds non-Muslim Britons blameless.

Conclusion

³⁵⁴ Treadwell and Garland, "Masculinity, Marginalization and Violence: A Case Study of the English Defence League," 625.

In April 2011, Adrian Tudway, the Metropolitan Police's National Co-ordinator for Domestic Extremism, sent an email to the National Association of Muslim Police, stating:

... [the EDL] are not extreme right wing as a group. Indeed if you look at their published material on their web-site, they are actively moving away from the right and violence with their mission statement etc... I really think you need to open a direct line of dialogue with them, that might be the best way to engage them...³⁵⁵

Tudway's comments suggest either that he has taken the EDL's claims at face value, or that he subscribes to some extent to the 'problematic Muslims' discourse. It is difficult to imagine these comments addressed to any other group in society; they are only acceptable because there is some social currency to understanding Muslims as problematic and the 'Muslim community' as responsible for changing anti-Islam views. To underscore this point, it is worth considering whether an Islamist website, which drew constant attention to the criminal deviance of non-Muslim Britons, explained this behaviour through inferior British values, and organised thousand-strong demonstrations throughout the country which regularly resulted in non-Muslims being targeted with violence and intimidation, would be considered 'extremist'. It is equally absurd to imagine that Jews would be advised by the National Co-ordinator to engage with an openly anti-Semitic group that was, nonetheless, 'moving away' from violence.

³⁵⁵ Vikram Dodd and Matthew Taylor, "Muslims Criticise Scotland Yard for Telling Them to Engage with EDL," *Guardian*, 2 September, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/sep/02/english-defence-league-muslims-police> [Retrieved 18 May 2012].

This chapter has argued that the English Defence League's Islamophobia is a culturally racist discourse. Racist discourse construction involves the demarcation of an in-group and an out-group, where the former considers itself superior and claims the right to decide who can belong, while the latter is represented as threatening its privileges and position. EDL discourse performed this function by racialising Muslim culture as the source of Muslim behaviour and conferring the role of arbiters of acceptability to culturally superior non-Muslims. The group utilised rhetorical strategies such as denial of prejudice, projection of culturally racist motivations on to Muslims, positive-self and negative-other representation, and diminutives such as 'we are not against all Muslims, but...' These strategies worked to construct Islam as oppositional to British values and identity and contained an implicit assumption of the latter's superiority. The EDL's claim that it only opposed 'radical Islam' dissolved into a discourse that laid the blame for the problems of society at Islam's door and made aggressive demands that the religion be reformed to be more acceptable. Whether the EDL's leadership sincerely believed itself not to be Islamophobic is a moot point. But knowingly or otherwise it employed a discourse which stratified British society hierarchically, constructed opposing subject positions for Muslims and non-Muslims, and endeavoured to protect the privileges of (traditionally white) non-Muslim British people against real and imagined demands for Muslim recognition.

Adrian Tudway's assessment that Muslims should consider engaging with the EDL indicates a broader problem. The group's analysis of Muslims and Islam is not considered extremist precisely because it is not particularly 'extreme' to hold such views - they are articulated every day in newspapers, by government ministers and by think-tank intellectuals who all converge around the same

theme: that Muslims in Britain are dangerous. In such a climate the soaring popularity of the group and the dramatic spike in Islamophobic hate crimes following high profile instances of terrorism³⁵⁶ should come as no surprise.

The English Defence League are indeed a symptom; not, as they claim, of 'Islamic extremism', but of the increasingly socially acceptable discourse of 'problematic Muslims'. The challenge posed by the group is therefore not simply to quell its violence or confront the more caustic elements of its protests. Rather, it requires deep reflection and confrontation of the entrenched societal Islamophobia that makes such a movement possible.

³⁵⁶ Oliver Wright, Nigel Morris, and James Legge, "EDL Marches on Newcastle as Attacks on Muslims Increase Tenfold in the Wake of Woolwich Machete Attack Which Killed Drummer Lee Rigby.," *Guardian*, 25 May, 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/edl-marches-on-newcastle-as-attacks-on-muslims-increase-tenfold-in-the-wake-of-woolwich-machete-attack-which-killed-drummer-lee-rigby-8631612.html> [Retrieved 26 May 2013].

Chapter Six – Islamophobia and national identity construction in Europe

Introduction

On 22 July 2011 a car bomb was detonated outside government buildings in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, resulting in eight deaths. Within an hour the *Observer's* foreign affairs editor, Peter Beaumont, had declared that the explosion was most likely the work of a 'Jihadist' group, and posited that Norway had been targeted because of its involvement in the war on Afghanistan, its reprinting of controversial Danish cartoons, and the filing of terror charges against an Iraqi born cleric who had threatened politicians with death if he was deported from the country.³⁵⁷ A few hours later, reports about further developments began to emerge. A man dressed in police uniform had opened fire on young people attending a Labour Party youth camp on the island of Utøya. Sixty-nine youths were killed on the island before police apprehended Anders Behring Breivik, a 32 year old ethnic Norwegian.

In his 1,500 page manifesto, entitled *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, Breivik explained that his motivation had been the desire to spark a revolution against the Islamicisation of the continent. Political correctness, 'cultural Marxism', radical feminism, and the EU's deliberate attempt to Islamise Europe, were all implicated in what he perceived as the cultural treason against

³⁵⁷ Reported in Guardian, "Norway Attacks Rolling Coverage – Friday 22 July 2011," 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2011/jul/22/oslo-explosion-live-coverage> [Retrieved 24 August 2012].

Europe's essence. For Breivik, Islam was quietly colonising Europe with the support of multiculturalist politicians and he considered himself a warrior whose duty was to defend Western Europe against this onslaught: "You cannot defeat Islamisation or halt/reverse the Islamic colonization of Western Europe without first removing the political doctrines manifested through multiculturalism/cultural Marxism..."³⁵⁸

Breivik's actions were universally condemned by European governments and commentators, yet the ideology that spurred him to action finds support across the continent, in both national debates about Muslim minorities and their integration and the civilisational discourses which seek to define European belonging. The construction of both European and national identity has been predicated historically on the construction of 'others', and in the post-2001 period Muslims have increasingly been identified as possessing values and identities that are considered antithetical. In this sense, Breivik's ideology is not an aberration but a radical continuation of mainstream discourses that view multiculturalism as a dangerous to European identity and solidarity, and Muslims as the most profound threat. Across Europe the discursive construction of stable national identities defined in cultural terms has been deemed essential to ensuring social cohesion, and within this discourse Muslims have been singled out as most threatening and most in need of coercive assimilation by the state.

This chapter considers how Muslim identity has increasingly been discursively constructed within European states as an 'other' against which to articulate national identity. The chapter explores culturalist conceptions of national identity

³⁵⁸ Anders Behring Breivik, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence," 2011, 12, <http://info.publicintelligence.net/AndersBehringBreivikManifesto.pdf> [Retrieved 24 August 2012].

in four European countries: Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands, and France. These countries diverge in their political culture, their immigration history, the state's official position towards immigrants, and state management of claims for religious recognition. Yet despite these variations, there has been a remarkable convergence across all four countries in terms of the narratives employed in debates that centred on questions of Muslim belonging. As Liz Fekete has noted, all over Europe states are defining themselves in opposition to Muslim culture, and moving away from multicultural projects towards a monocultural national identity, where 'Western' values are articulated as antithetical and superior to Muslim norms and practices.³⁵⁹ The following analysis considers how these identities have been put forward, and, using critical methodology, explores both contradictions within the discourses and the political effects of these narratives of exclusion.

The discursive construction of national identity

Engaging the concept of national identity requires a preliminary note of caution. Siniša Malešević has claimed that national identity is a conceptual chimera not worthy of serious analytical attention, pointing out that national identities are neither things nor living beings that can impose requirements, make connections or feel threatened.³⁶⁰ The notion that individuals possess or are in need of a tangible, well defined national identity is an ideological position, and is entangled in the discursive work that nationalism does to interpellate subjects in certain

³⁵⁹ Fekete, "Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State," 18.

³⁶⁰ Siniša Malešević, "The Chimera of National Identity," *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 2 (2011): 276.

ways in order to give rise to certain identities. In this sense, noting Malešević's criticism, national identity is here treated as an ideological subjectivity that sustains the nation as an imagined community. Without a nation there would be no need for national identity. The concept, chimeric as it may be, upholds the legitimacy of the nation state and it is therefore in a state's interest to nurture the identity of its citizens to reflect national belonging. National identities are therefore only understandable in the realm of discourse, and through the language and other semiotic practices that construct belonging to the imagined national community.³⁶¹

The discursive work of national identity lies in its capacity to mark an inside and outside, a native and a foreign. As Catarina Triandafyllidou has argued, national identity expresses a relative feeling of belonging that only makes sense when compared with the feelings members of a nation have towards foreigners.³⁶² National identity therefore requires difference in order to demarcate those who belong and those who do not, and this difference is often interpreted as danger. As David Campbell has demonstrated, discourses of danger have been central to the process of imagining the national community: by telling us what to fear these discourses are able to fix who we are.³⁶³ In this way alternative identities are often represented as the negative 'other' against which national identity is contrasted: what the nation is not is used to affirm what the nation is.

³⁶¹ Campbell, *Writing Security*, 11; R. De Cillia, M. Reisigl, and R. Wodak, "The Discursive Construction of National Identities," *Discourse & Society* 10, no. 2 (1999): 153.

³⁶² Triandafyllidou, "National Identity and the 'Other,'" 598–599.

³⁶³ Campbell, *Writing Security*, 170.

This chapter is concerned with how national identity has been constructed in contrast to Muslim identity. In Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands, and France, Islamophobic discourses which identified Muslims as dangerous and threatening to the nation led to high profile public debates about national identity and values. In what can be understood as the performative constitution of identity,³⁶⁴ these states demarcated their boundaries through the invocation of 'Muslim culture', conceived as diametrically opposed to national values inherited from the Enlightenment. Those values deemed 'European' or 'Western' were represented as natural and essential *national* characteristics, and were instrumentalised to police the boundaries of who did or did not belong to the nation. The concepts considered particularly demonstrative of the character of the nation differed among the four countries studied, but all used the idea of the inherent and eternal 'otherness' of Muslims as a way to shore up both national identity and enlightened European belonging. The Islamophobic dimension of these discourses lies in the way that Muslim culture was considered *the* impediment to national belonging, in such a way that even descendants of immigrants from Muslim majority countries, born and educated in Europe, were marked out as dangerous to the existence and continuance of the nation.

In order to delineate Islamophobic discourses of national identity the chapter focuses on 'construction moments'; events which have involved the representation of Muslims in the nations studied. Construction moments are catalysts for the emergence, recycling and re-framing of discourses, and occur when a given event leads to public debate and an attempt to represent

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

subjectivities in a particular way.³⁶⁵ The construction moments detailed below represent changes in, or reaffirmations of, national discourses. These may be triggered by a public event and occur over a relatively short period of time, such as the anti-minaret initiative in Switzerland and the Danish cartoon controversy, or they may be much more well entrenched positions that are nonetheless re-awakened by particular incidents or utterances as in the case of Dutch homo-emancipation policy or French gender equality arguments in relation to Islamic dress. The key is that a debate is initiated in which identities are questioned and discourses of national identity come to be articulated. The following analysis considers how these discourses of national identity were articulated in opposition to 'Muslim identity' and 'Islamic values'.

Islam as Europe's 'other'

In each of the countries under study a particular discourse was put forward which claimed that Muslim identity, values and culture were oppositional to national culture. In the case of Switzerland, the minaret referendum was more than a question of whether the architectural expression of religious diversity should be permitted. By tying the vote to questions of national identity the initiative became an opportunity to symbolically reject Islam and the values it was supposed to promote. Similarly, in Denmark, escalating anger at Muslim outrage towards the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons created a dichotomy of identities which demanded not only that Muslims in Denmark choose sides in an

³⁶⁵ Nickels et al., "Working Paper 13: A Comparative Study of the Representations of 'Suspect' Communities in Multi-Ethnic Britain and of Their Impact on Irish Communities and Muslim Communities - Mapping Newspaper Content," 4–5.

increasingly international conflict, but also that Danes choose between sensitivity to the feelings of others and a commitment to absolute free expression, newly defined as a central premise of Danish national identity. In both the Netherlands and France, Islam was constructed as the exclusive domain of particular negative ideological positions, which were represented as absolutely antithetical to national culture and Enlightenment values. Culturally determined 'Muslim homophobia' in the Netherlands was constructed as existentially threatening to the tolerant 'homo-friendly' Dutch nation. Correspondingly, the conflicts over Islamic dress in France focused (amongst other things) on the danger that veiling was thought to pose to gender equality.

In each country Islam became central to representations of the nation, marking the boundaries of belonging according to certain values deemed 'European'. In this sense the construction moments gave rise to nationally specific discourses that not only sought to define the identity of the nation in opposition to this 'other', but also re-affirmed national belonging to the *idea* of Europe, considered superior, rational and liberal. The following analysis considers these four states in turn.

The Swiss minaret referendum and the symbolic rejection of Islam

The Swiss minaret referendum represents the first, and to date only, time that a specifically anti-Islam popular vote has been undertaken in Western Europe. Initiated by the right-wing populist Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP), with the backing of a minor Christian evangelical party (Eidenössische Demokratische Union, EDU), the referendum proposed a constitutional ban on the construction

of minarets, and was passed in November 2009 with a majority of 57.5 percent in favour.

Most striking about the anti-minaret initiative was its symbolic nature. The central issue of the referendum was whether minarets, a symbol of Islam, should be tolerated in Switzerland. The vote itself was also largely symbolic, entailing no economic or political consequences that may otherwise have impacted on individuals' decision to vote in favour or against the initiative.³⁶⁶ In addition, the discourse promoted by the SVP to support its anti-minaret position consisted largely of emotive symbols which helped to escalate the matter from a local building permission issue into a nationwide referendum that sought to define the place of Islam in Switzerland.

The referendum was sparked by an application for the country's fifth minaret in the town of Langenthal, Berner Mittelland. The 2006 application for the fourth (and final) minaret, in Wangen bei Olten, had caused controversy when local resistance against construction led to a long spell of legal wrangling in local and national courts before the application was finally approved in 2009 by the Supreme Court.³⁶⁷ Conceptualising the issue as an intolerable aesthetic attack on the nation's skyline, the SVP launched a 2007 initiative calling for the prohibition of minarets in the country and this was submitted in July 2008 with 114,895 supporting signatures.³⁶⁸ Apart from the EDU, all other political parties in Switzerland were opposed to the initiative, and the Federal Government issued

³⁶⁶ Olga Orlanskaya and Gunther G Schulze, "The Determinants of Islamophobia — An Empirical Analysis of the Swiss Minaret Referendum" (2010): 3, http://crem.univ-rennes1.fr/EPCS11/submissions/epcs2011_submission_256.pdf [Retrieved 18 June 2011].

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

³⁶⁸ Johannes Matyassy and Seraina Flury, *Challenges for Switzerland's Public Diplomacy: Referendum on Banning Minarets* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2011), 17, http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectives_P4_2011.pdf [Retrieved 2 September 2012].

four arguments recommending rejection, claiming that it: violated religious freedom and was discriminatory since it was directed exclusively at Muslims; was contrary to the Swiss constitution and breached fundamental human rights conventions; was ineffective in fighting extremism and would not stop the influence of Islam, and; would hinder the integration of Muslims in Switzerland, as well as potentially damaging the country's standing in the world and negatively impact national security and the economy.³⁶⁹ Despite pre-referendum polls which predicted that the ban would be rejected,³⁷⁰ the vote passed with a 57.5 percent majority, as well as a cantonal majority, with only four of Switzerland's 26 cantons opposed to the initiative. As a result, Article 72 of the Federal constitution was amended to read: 'the construction of minarets is prohibited'.³⁷¹

The notion of public space as a site of identity contestation has been studied by Jeanne Kilde, who highlighted the centrality of identity in the debates concerning the Park 51 Islamic centre near the 'ground zero' site of the former World Trade Center. Kilde has pointed out that during the debates about the site's reconstruction a national discourse emerged that focused upon the need to use the space sensitively, implying that the close proximity of Muslims would be

³⁶⁹ Simon J A Mason, Abbas Aroua, and Annika Åberg, "Mediating Tensions over Islam in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland," *Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich and Cordoba Foundation, Geneva Center for Security Studies (CSS) Swiss Federal Institute of Technology*, 2010, 13–14, <http://129.132.199.42/var/ssn/storage/original/application/f4900bb611904ea6ef86caf1a507da38.pdf> [Retrieved 2 September 2012].

³⁷⁰ Martin Baumann, "Anxieties, Banning Minarets and Populist Politics in Switzerland – a Preliminary Analysis," *Pluralism Project at Harvard University*, 2009, http://www.pluralism.org/files/spotlight/Baumann_Swiss-ban-on-minarets_Nov09.pdf [Retrieved 2 September 2009].

³⁷¹ Orlanskaya and Schulze, "The Determinants of Islamophobia — An Empirical Analysis of the Swiss Minaret Referendum," 2–5.

insensitive.³⁷² Proponents of the discourse sought to exclude Muslims from this particular public space in deference to the grieving families of victims, suggesting that the connection between Islam and the September 11 attacks meant Muslims were less entitled to the space than other Americans. The symbolic incompatibility of an Islamic centre near the 'ground zero' site thus provided the rationale for the exclusion of Muslims as not fully American and entitled to fewer rights than other members of the national community. The Park-Zero controversy illustrates how discursive representations have material political effects, making some actions inevitable and others unthinkable. The exclusion that begins through a discursive questioning of Muslims can lead to concrete exclusionary practices when Muslims are prevented from accessing public space on the same terms as non-Muslims. The Swiss minaret referendum followed a similar logic.

The increased visibility of Muslims in Switzerland over the last decade has been shaped both by public criticism of court decisions which affirmed Muslim religious claims (such as the High Court decision to allow the construction of the fourth minaret, as well as struggles within municipalities over Islamic burial sites) and an increased resentment of Islam after the September 11, 2001 attacks and especially the 2004 attacks in Madrid. However, while the New York attacks led to increased media stereotyping of Islam, the Madrid attacks unleashed a more profound change in reporting, and threat became a central motif. Muslims were no longer presented as victims of inadequate integration, but perpetrators who shunned mixing, and 'Muslim culture' was presented as threatening to Swiss

³⁷² Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "The Park 51/Ground Zero Controversy and Sacred Sites as Contested Space," *Religions* 2, no. 3 (2011): 306.

norms and values.³⁷³ The 2006 World Values Survey revealed that negative opinions of Muslims in Switzerland had increased relative to general xenophobic sentiments, with 19.8 percent reporting that they would not want a Muslim for a neighbour as opposed to 7.1 percent who would not want a foreigner for a neighbour.³⁷⁴

The SVP's anti-minaret campaign escalated a planning issue into a matter of national identity through a dual process of politicisation and culturalization. The desire to construct a minaret was politicised through the presentation of an argument that stressed that minarets were unnecessary since Islam could be practised freely without the feature. The desire to construct a minaret was therefore cast as inherently suspicious, an aggressive symbol of non-conformity and a mark of the ascent of Islam on the Swiss landscape which, if not countered, would lead to the spread of Sharia.³⁷⁵ Despite the fact that architectural features themselves pose no objective threat, minarets were made contentious through an association with Islamic fundamentalism, which served to re-ascribe them as symbols not of religion, but of power. The SVP's Ulrich Schlüer, co-president of the Stop the Minarets Movement, stated: 'The minaret has got nothing to do with religion. It's a symbol of political power, a prelude to the introduction of sharia law'.³⁷⁶ By linking minarets to the inevitable growth of

³⁷³ Patrik Ettinger, "Problematisation of Muslims in Public Communication in Switzerland," in *Conference: Representing Islam, Comparative Perspectives, University of Zurich* (Zurich, 2008), 7–10, www.foeg.uzh.ch/analyse/publikationen/Problematisierung_Muslime.pdf [Retrieved 2 September 2012].

³⁷⁴ Martin Dolezal, Marc Helbling, and Swen Hutter, "Debating Islam in Austria, Germany and Switzerland: Ethnic Citizenship, Church–State Relations and Right-Wing Populism," *West European Politics* 33, no. 2 (2010): 174.

³⁷⁵ Orlanskaya and Schulze, "The Determinants of Islamophobia — An Empirical Analysis of the Swiss Minaret Referendum," 2–6.

³⁷⁶ Quoted in Ian Traynor, "Swiss to Vote on Mosque Minarets Ban," *The Guardian*, 26 November, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/26/swiss-mosques-minarets-ban-vote> [Retrieved 24 October 2012].

sharia in Switzerland, the anti-minaret campaign invoked images of an intolerant Islam diametrically opposed to European values which would be encouraged should voters reject the initiative:

We do not want to limit freedom of religion, we want to outlaw the political symbol.... The fear is great that the minarets will be followed by the calls to prayer of the muezzin... sharia is gaining in importance in Switzerland and in Europe. That means honour killings, forced marriages, circumcision, wearing the burqa, ignoring school rules, and even stoning.³⁷⁷

As a symbol of the power of Islam, the minaret was represented as an intolerable challenge to Swiss constitutional values and a claim to sole representation that undermined democracy. When prominent radical feminist Julia Onken called on women to support the initiative she further entrenched this discursive construction. Stating that 'mosques are male houses, minarets are male power symbols',³⁷⁸ she maintained that the minaret represented a visible sign of the state's acceptance of the oppression of women and must therefore be opposed. Through the symbolic representation of minarets as emblematic of Muslim power designs on Swiss public space, the cultural threat posed by Islam became the central theme of the anti-minaret campaign.

One of the most contentious symbols of the anti-minaret campaign was the poster produced by Goal advertising agency, which depicted an ominous burqa-clad figure alongside a Swiss flag pierced with looming missile-like minarets and the words: 'Stop. Yes to the minaret ban'. The poster accessibly gathered

³⁷⁷ Ulrich Schlüer, quoted in Institute of Race Relations, "The Swiss Referendum on Minarets: Background and Aftermath. Briefing Paper No. 1 - February 2010," 2010, 2, http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/ERA_BriefingPaper1.pdf [Retrieved 29 March 2013].

³⁷⁸ Quoted in Traynor, "Swiss to Vote on Mosque Minarets Ban."

together the central tropes of the anti-minaret position, representing a threatening and dangerous Islam that would not only blot the Swiss landscape but would also implicitly challenge Swiss values by sanctioning Islamist social models that allegedly professed inequality between the sexes. Proponents of the ban thus explicitly demonstrated a causal relationship between Islam, violence, and social models incompatible with Swiss gender equality norms. This semiotic display emotively linked minaret construction to the dissolution of Swiss culture and society, and the ability of the minaret initiative's backers to bring these larger issues into the debate illustrates how the process of culturalization worked. By enfolding discourses of culture into a debate about the suitability of architecture, minarets formed a proxy for a larger rejection of Islam, defined negatively and in opposition to Swiss culture.

This discourse appears to have been successful in politicising and culturalising the minaret issue. Post-referendum polls revealed that the majority of those who voted in favour of the ban had done so to set a sign against both the spread of Islam and Islamic social models and to emphasise that the limits of Swiss tolerance had been stretched too far by Muslim demands.³⁷⁹ That no evidence existed to suggest mosques with minarets are any more likely than others to propagate these values was irrelevant. The referendum became a symbolic rejection of a constructed threat through the representation of the minaret as a political symbol that encouraged both the spread of Sharia and Islamic social models that relegated women to second class status. This discourse transformed the referendum from a planning into a civilisational issue, creating subject

³⁷⁹ Baumann, "Anxieties, Banning Minarets and Populist Politics in Switzerland – a Preliminary Analysis"; Mason, Aroua, and Åberg, "Mediating Tensions over Islam in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland," 14.

positions which made the vote a choice between supposedly incompatible and oppositional cultures. The fact that only 15 percent of those who voted in favour of the ban cited specific criticisms of Muslims living in Switzerland suggests that it cannot be understood as a general rejection of Swiss Muslims.³⁸⁰ Rather, the referendum should be understood as a symbolic vote against Islam and the perceived Islamisation of Switzerland. It is unlikely that a mere planning issue would have gathered such popular support in a national referendum had proponents of the ban not discursively constructed the initiative as symbolic of a wider issue. Through the employment of a civilisational discourse, which explicitly pitted Swiss values against 'Muslim values', the anti-minaret campaign was able to unite a disparate nation without linguistic, cultural or ethnic homogeneity against an 'other' that was not just outside the nation, but outside of Europe itself.

The Danish cartoon controversy and the politics of outrage

On 30 September 2005, as a result of Culture Editor Flemming Rose's request that cartoonists stop self-censoring, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published twelve cartoons in an article entitled *The Face of Muhammad*. The discourse which emerged in the din of controversy that followed worked to emphasise the centrality of free expression as a Danish and European value, against the intolerance of Muslims and their demand for special treatment. The article accompanying the cartoons articulated what was to become the central premise of the discourse: that Muslims demanded a respect not accorded to

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 14.

other groups and which undermined the principle of freedom of speech. The construction moments that occurred during the cartoon controversy worked to underscore this representation. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's unwillingness to meet with Muslim ambassadors to diffuse the conflict was articulated as a decisive refusal to engage with those who wished to see him censor the press. At the same time, violent protests across the world were represented as archetypal Muslim reactions to perceived provocation, and this understanding encouraged the perception of Danish Muslim protest as demonstrations against freedom of expression rather than a call for mutual understanding and dialogue.

The immediate background of the cartoons was a heated discussion in Denmark about growing Islamic extremism in Europe and perceived increase in media self-censorship with regard to Muslim issues. The difficulty experienced by Danish writer Kåre Bluitgen in finding an illustrator for his children's book on the life of Muhammad was much publicised, as was the attack on a lecturer at the University of Copenhagen, who was set upon by a gang apparently because he read Arabic passages aloud from the Qur'an during lectures.³⁸¹ Flemming Rose claimed that frustration with this increased climate of timidity and self-censorship, along with a stifling European culture of political correctness which made it impossible to criticise minorities, had led to the idea for the article.³⁸²

As Simon Weaver has pointed out, only the most rigid of readings could consider all the cartoons to be equally offensive, blasphemous, racist or

³⁸¹ Henrik Niels Gregersen, "On Taboos: The Danish Cartoon Crisis 2005–2008," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 48, no. 1 (2009): 80.

³⁸² Robert Carle, "Cartoon Crisis: Islam and Danish Liberalism," *Society* 44, no. 1 (2006): 81.

Islamophobic.³⁸³ Each of the illustrations took up a different theme; one portrayed Muhammad with a stick walking through the desert; another poked fun at the newspaper, depicting a school child named Muhammad pointing at a chalkboard on which was written in Arabic: 'the editors of Jyllands-Posten are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs'. The most inflammatory cartoon, however, and certainly the most discussed, was Kurt Westergaard's depiction of Muhammad with a lit fuse in his turban. Alongside the twelve drawings, the article's text claimed:

Modern secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They demand an exceptional position, insisting on special consideration for their own religious feelings. This is incompatible with secular democracy and freedom of speech, where one has to put up with insults, mockery, and ridicule. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at, and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price, but that is of minor importance in the present context.³⁸⁴

This justification for publication set the tone of the representations that were to follow. Placing Muslims in opposition to modernity, secularism, democracy and freedom of speech, this binary created subject positions that were eagerly employed by a variety of Danish actors.

As the conflict was escalated on to the world stage the reaction to the cartoons' publication took many different forms. In October 2005, Prime Minister Rasmussen refused to meet with 11 ambassadors from Muslim countries to

³⁸³ Simon Weaver, "Liquid Racism and the Danish Prophet Muhammad Cartoons," *Current Sociology* 58, no. 5 (2010): 677.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Anja Kublitz, "The Cartoon Controversy: Creating Muslims in a Danish Setting," *Social Analysis* 54, no. 3 (2010): 112–113.

discuss the article, and in response a delegation of Danish imams travelled to the Middle East to actively gain support outside Denmark, claiming that Rasmussen's refusal illustrated that the government failed to take Muslims' concerns seriously. This decision dramatically expanded the stage upon which discontent was voiced. Pakistani Islamist group Jamaat-i-Islami offered a \$10,000 bounty on the head of the cartoonists, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference put the issue on their agenda, and protests in Muslim majority countries saw Danish flags burned in demonstrations in Gaza and elsewhere. In response to this German and French newspapers printed part of the cartoons on 1 February 2006, and this led to further escalation of the conflict and an apparent drawing of stark ideological opposition between 'the West' and the 'Muslim world'. In Lebanon and Tehran Danish embassies were attacked, the Norwegian embassy was burned down in Syria, and protests in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, and Nigeria led to several deaths.³⁸⁵ These international protests were represented as emblematic of Muslim anger and intolerance, and undeniable evidence that freedom of expression must be defended in the face of violent demands for Muslim recognition. The cartoons and the reactions that followed had the effect of constructing an oppositional relationship between Danes and Muslims, with the former represented as championing the enlightenment value of freedom of speech and the latter constructed as mired in violent intolerance of any criticism of Islam. This binary encouraged Muslims in Denmark to be seen as internal carriers of a culture which rejected Danish values and posed an existential threat to the ongoing life of the national community.

³⁸⁵ Gregersen, "On Taboos: The Danish Cartoon Crisis 2005–2008," 81–82.

The Prime Minister's reaction to the eleven ambassadors who wrote in October 2005 to request an interview illustrates how these subject positions became entrenched. The ambassadors' letter highlighted their concerns with what they perceived as a growing Islamophobia in Denmark, and the cartoons were mentioned as just one example of an ongoing 'smear campaign' against Muslims.³⁸⁶ Rasmussen refused to meet with the ambassadors and responded instead with a letter explaining: 'The freedom of expression has a wide scope and the Danish Government has no means of influencing the press'.³⁸⁷ According to the Egyptian ambassador, the purpose of the letter had been to ask for nothing more than a moral condemnation of the cartoons from the Prime Minister, however Rasmussen interpreted and subsequently represented it to the media as a call for the government to limit press freedom: 'I will not meet with them because it is so crystal clear what principles Danish democracy is built upon that there is no reason to do so... As Prime Minister, I have no power whatsoever to limit the press – nor do I want such power.'³⁸⁸ Despite the diplomats' protestations that they had merely wanted to diffuse the situation through dialogue, Rasmussen continued to claim that their appeal for a meeting was a demand for censorship:

In my opinion, this reveals an abysmal ignorance of the principles of a true democracy as well as a complete failure to understand that in a free

³⁸⁶ Jytte Klausen, *The Cartoons That Shook the World* (Yale University Press, 2009), 65.

³⁸⁷ Mason, Aroua, and Åberg, "Mediating Tensions over Islam in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland," 4.

³⁸⁸ Paul Belien, "Europe Criticises Copenhagen over Cartoons," *The Brussels Journal*, 21 December, 2005, <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/589> [Retrieved 25 October 2012].

democracy, the government neither can, must or should interfere with the press.³⁸⁹

The continued representation of the diplomats' request in such stark terms indicates Rasmussen's adherence to the discursive construction originally laid out by the cartoons, and this lent some official respectability to the notion that Muslim opposition to the images was based on anti-secular and anti-free speech leanings.

A further illustration of these subject positions can be gleaned from reactions to the 14 October 2005 protest organised by Muslims in Denmark. The demonstration was called in order to provide a focal point for Muslim opposition, to counter the possibility that someone may take up violence, and to show that Muslims were peaceful and could operate dissent democratically.³⁹⁰ Holding banners in both Danish and Arabic which read: 'No to the clash of civilisations, yes to the dialogue of civilisations' and 'No to racism and fanaticism, yes to peace and co-existence', the 3000 strong demonstration moved from Nørrebro Station, near the largest mosque in Copenhagen, to the town hall square, where a request was made by organisers to participate in a common prayer. A few hundred joined in the prayer, claiming that 'praying is the most peaceful act one can undertake.'³⁹¹ Anja Kublitz has highlighted how the protest dramatically revealed the different interpretative spaces of the Muslims who participated and the general public who witnessed it. The sight of thousands of Muslims protesting seemed to confirm for the public prevailing views on how Muslims demonstrate

³⁸⁹ Quoted in Rune Engelbreth Larson, "The Cartoon Crisis and Danish Islamophobia," *Panhumanism*, 13 May, 2006, <http://www.panhumanism.com/articles/2006-02.php> [Retrieved 25 October 2012].

³⁹⁰ Kublitz, "The Cartoon Controversy: Creating Muslims in a Danish Setting," 108.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

and what they demonstrate for. In this sense the protest was perceived not as a demonstration for dialogue, peace and co-existence, rather, it was interpreted within a worldview that considered all Muslim political action as essentially Islamic: *for* Islam and therefore *against* the West. Kublitz has highlighted how some onlookers confronted by the sight of Muslims praying interpreted the demonstration as for Islam and against secular freedom of expression.³⁹² This visual understanding of what was occurring was supported by a misinterpretation of the sounds of the demonstration. The slogan '*Islam er fred*' (Islam is peace) was misheard as '*Islam er vred*' (Islam is angry), leading pedestrians to ask the demonstrators if they were going to war.³⁹³

The demonstration confirmed for some the bipolar positions entrenched by the discourse of Muslims vs. secular freedom. What was seen by onlookers seems to have been fitted to a mental representation of what they expected to see, based on perceptions of how Muslims usually behave when protesting or expressing dissent. As the form of the demonstration appeared religious, the mishearing of slogans, which transformed an assertion of peace into a declaration of war, coupled with the prone submission of prayer fit a mental model congruent with media representations of Muslim protest. It is little wonder that for spectators the belief that the demonstrators were protesting Danish freedom of expression seemed to be confirmed by the form the protest took.

The increasingly opposing subject identities constructed by the discourse surrounding the cartoons meant that the ostensibly positive, progressive value of free speech was used to mark the boundaries of Danish national identity. This

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid., 110.

was tied to larger, civilisational narratives by underscoring difference, formulated as the binary opposition between modernity and tradition. The publication of the cartoons developed an already existing narrative that centred on the incompatibility between Western values and Islam and promoted it to national and international attention. The West, aligned with democracy, individualism, secularism and liberalism, was increasingly represented in contrast with Islam's backward primitivism, oppression of the individual and failure to accept the separation of religion and state, and this interpretative frame marked the discourse to such a degree that to be both European and Muslim was considered a contradiction in terms.³⁹⁴ Muslims were perceived as having allegiance to their religion over Danish values and to be signalling their difference in a way that undermined the fundamental underpinnings of Danish national identity: the separation of religion and state and the freedom to express critical opinions of religion.³⁹⁵ Freedom of expression became an absolute value in the discourse surrounding the cartoons.

Flemming Rose claimed that the decision to publish the cartoons sent a positive message, signalling that Muslims were accepted as an integral part of Danish daily life, and as such were subject to the same treatment as anyone else.³⁹⁶ The cartoons, he claimed, were an act of inclusion:

It's humiliating and discriminating to treat any minority as a kind of odd, special group. It's very important to treat everyone equally. The cartoonists were just doing what they are doing every day with all kinds of figures,

³⁹⁴ Tina Gudrun Jensen, "To Be 'Danish', Becoming 'Muslim': Contestations of National Identity?," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 389.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 390.

³⁹⁶ Carle, "Cartoon Crisis: Islam and Danish Liberalism," 82.

issues, institutions. It's an act of love and inclusion to satirize people. There is some kind of recognition in that, to know you can laugh and make fun of one another.³⁹⁷

The notion that the cartoons were an expression of inclusion, however, was strongly undermined by their instrumentalization as objects of revenge. In the early hours of 12 February 2008 police arrested three Muslim men (two Tunisian nationals with permanent residency in Denmark and one Moroccan man with Danish citizenship) on suspicion of plotting to assassinate Kurt Westergaard, illustrator of the most contentious cartoon. The arrests provided a pretext for reprinting the cartoons across the media, starting with *Jyllands-Posten*. This mass reprinting of the cartoons illustrates how the entrenched positions generated by the original controversy had created a binary opposition of Islam vs. freedom of speech that could now be wheeled out in response to any perceived Muslim provocation. The centre-left Danish newspaper *Information* justified its printing of the cartoons in an editorial which claimed:

Information chose not to print the cartoons first time around. Back then we felt that they were a clear provocation against the Muslim community. Not this time though. People have been plotting to kill an innocent seventy-three-year-old man. This is completely unacceptable.³⁹⁸

This statement illustrates how the cartoons were discursively transformed from offensive to defensive symbols. What began as a 'clear provocation' against Muslims had now been re-ascribed as emblems of solidarity with the champions

³⁹⁷ Quote in Alia Malek, "Beyond the Cartoon Controversy," *Columbia Journalism Review* 45, no. 6 (2007): 18.

³⁹⁸ Ellen Brun and Jacques Hersh, "The Danish Disease: A Political Culture of Islamophobia," *Monthly Review* June (2008): 18.

of freedom, and Muslims, linked with the alleged plotters by virtue of their religion, were considered legitimate targets for collective punishment and no longer entitled to feel provoked.

The (homo)sexualisation of Dutch national identity

In the Netherlands, the discourses that constructed national identity in opposition to a supposed Muslim culture have taken many forms, but one of the most interesting and prominent was the representation of homosexual tolerance as a Dutch cultural value. As Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens have observed, sexual liberation has been used to frame Europe as the avatar of modernity and freedom, while depicting Muslims as the cultural bearers of backward homophobia.³⁹⁹ Nowhere in Europe is this discourse more prevalent than in the Netherlands, where homosexual freedom has been instrumentalised to mark the borders of belonging in discursive, symbolic and concrete ways. Several construction moments have brought this discourse to the foreground, including the anti-gay comments of imam El-Moumni in 2001, which were characterised as typical and representative of all Muslims; the rise of openly gay and Islamophobic populist politician Pim Fortuyn; and government policies such as the 2008-2011 'homoemancipation' strategy, which particularly targeted young people of Muslim background, and the 'integration abroad act' which utilised tolerance of homosexuals (among other 'national values') as a means of testing potential immigrants' suitability for family reunification in the Netherlands.

³⁹⁹ P. Mepschen, J. W. Duyvendak, and E. H. Tonkens, "Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands," *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 963.

Sexual freedom, and the particular sexual freedom of gay people, has been used as an indicator of modernity to create a dichotomy of identities, with those who are modern represented as accepting and embracing homosexuality and those who are pre-modern represented as opposing it. Through a process of what Jasbir Puar has termed 'homonationalism',⁴⁰⁰ the liberatory struggle of gay people has been defined as a central tenet of Dutch national identity, and not only juxtaposed against a perceived Muslim cultural homophobia, but instrumentalised as a means of coercion and exclusion to mark the boundaries of the Netherlands and regulate access to the national community.

The Dutch positioning of homosexual tolerance as a national value has become central to identity construction over the last decade. In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country to confer equal marriage rights to homosexuals, effectively removing all legal discrimination against same sex couples and paving the way for the development of a national myth that viewed Dutch society as entirely 'homo-friendly'. In this climate of national self-congratulation, Muslim homophobia came to be seen as the only obstacle remaining to gay equality, and focus began to shift to immigrants and their descendants as the carriers of culturally sanctioned anti-gay attitudes that threatened the unity of Dutch society. This debate gained prominence in May 2001 when a relatively unknown Rotterdam imam, Khalil El-Moumni, was interviewed on national television about the legalisation of gay marriage. El-Moumni stated that homosexuality was an illness that threatened the reproduction and future of society, and his comments were taken to be an endorsement of increasing homophobic attacks in the area perpetrated by young

⁴⁰⁰ Jasbir K Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

men of Moroccan and Turkish descent. In fact, as Paul Mepschen has highlighted, the imam unequivocally condemned the violence in a portion of the interview that was not aired.⁴⁰¹ Nevertheless, his religiously conservative views were framed by Dutch media as representative of the entire Muslim community of the Netherlands and taken to be symbolic of the lack of cultural integration of Muslims. Responding to the crisis, Prime Minister Wim Kok spent the full ten minutes of his weekly television address explaining that Muslims must tolerate homosexuals and all imams were invited to a 'tolerance conference' by the Liberal Democratic Minister of Large Cities Affairs. The intervention of the government escalated and politicised the issue, allowing a discourse to crystallise which placed Muslim homophobia in direct opposition to Dutch tolerance.

The rise of openly gay and Islamophobic politician Pim Fortuyn and his List Pim Fortuyn Party, which found political success after his 2002 assassination, further reinforced the antithetical identities constructed by this discourse. Fortuyn's populist politics focused on the perceived cultural gulf between Islam and the West, and his public gay identity positioned him perfectly to take up the defence of Dutch progressive sexual values against the threat believed to be posed by Islamic tradition.⁴⁰² He claimed that Islam was a backward culture,⁴⁰³ and linked the increasing presence of Muslims to the retreat of women's and gay rights, stating that he did not want 'to do women's and gay liberation all over

⁴⁰¹ Paul Mepschen, "Against Tolerance: Islam, Sexuality, and the Politics of Belonging in the Netherlands," *Monthly Review*, 2009, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2009/mepschen130709.html> [Retrieved 9 January 2012].

⁴⁰² Peter van der Veer, "Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh, and the Politics of Tolerance in the Netherlands," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 114–115.

⁴⁰³ Halleh Ghorashi, "Ayaan Hirsi Ali: Daring or Dogmatic? Debates on Multiculturalism and Emancipation in the Netherlands," in *Multiple Identifications and the Self*, ed. Toon an Meijl and Henk Driessen (Utrecht: Stichting Focasl, 2003), 116, http://www.kanak-attak.de/ka/down/pdf/amr/Halleh_Gorashi_Forum_Focaal_Final.pdf [Retrieved 9 January 2012].

again.⁴⁰⁴ This alarmist discourse encouraged the construction of opposing subjectivities for Muslims and Dutch, where the former represented a threat to the freedoms enjoyed in the Netherlands. Positioning the Netherlands as the heir of enlightened modernity, Fortuyn contrasted the country's tolerance of gay people against the intrinsic homophobia of Islam, stating: 'Muslims have a very bad attitude to homosexuality, they're very intolerant.'⁴⁰⁵ By representing Muslim homophobia as essential and culturally sanctioned, Fortuyn strengthened the discourse of homonationalism in which Islam in the Netherlands symbolised a regressive cultural assault that threatened not only the hard-won freedoms of homosexuals, but the very project of European modernity itself.

The need to protect the gains of modernity from Muslims who wished to restrict such freedom became so deeply rooted in the discourse around homosexuality that it became impossible to talk about LGBT politics in the Netherlands without discussing Islam and Muslims.⁴⁰⁶ The policy document 'Simply Gay', launched in 2007, addressed this issue, albeit without explicitly discussing Islam. The document laid out the 2008-2011 'homoemancipation' strategy for the country and identified Turkish and Moroccan communities as the primary targets of a policy that would create a 'third emancipatory wave' and greater social acceptance in those parts of Dutch society where homosexuality was still a sensitive issue.⁴⁰⁷ As Jivraj and de Jong have stressed, it was not

⁴⁰⁴ S. Bracke, "From 'Saving Women' to 'Saving Gays': Rescue Narratives and Their Dis/continuities," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 2 (2012): 239.

⁴⁰⁵ Kirsty Lang, "At Home with 'Professor Pim'. 4 May.," *BBC*, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1966979.stm [Retrieved 26 October 2012].

⁴⁰⁶ Mepschen, "Against Tolerance: Islam, Sexuality, and the Politics of Belonging in the Netherlands."

⁴⁰⁷ Ministry of Education Culture and Science, "Simply Gay: Dutch Government's LGBT Policy Document 2008-2011," *The Council for Global Equality*, 2007, 11,

necessary to specifically state in the document that Islam was the problem, since it was implicit from the communities targeted that *Muslim* homophobia was considered the prime danger to gay freedom⁴⁰⁸. The problem was culturalized as emanating from specific (Muslim) communities, which must be targeted through coercive measure that demanded these problematic communities tolerate homosexuality.

The Integration Abroad Act 2005 (*Wet inburgering in het buitenland*) instrumentalised homosexual tolerance as a tool of coercion in a similar way. One of the provisions of the Act was the overseas integration test, introduced in 2006, where all non-Western foreign nationals who wished to join family members or spouses in the Netherlands were required to sit a pre-entry integration exam in their home country before being issued a visa. Part of the test required applicants for immigration to look at a photograph of two men kissing and report whether the picture offended them and whether they understood it to represent an expression of personal liberty. Judith Butler has highlighted that the fact that citizens of countries considered presumptively modern (EU and US nationals, Canadians, Australians, Swiss, and other 'Western' nations, as well as those whose income exceeded €45,000) were exempted from having to take the test underscores the assumption that the acceptance of homosexuality is a temporally located modern and culturally advanced position.⁴⁰⁹ The sexual freedom of gay people was in this way used to exclude those considered pre-modern and culturally regressive from access to the Netherlands (and their Dutch families and

http://www.globalequality.org/storage/documents/pdf/simply_gay_dutch_lgbt_policy.pdf [Retrieved 16 October 2012].

⁴⁰⁸ Suhraiya Jivraj and Anisa de Jong, "The Dutch Homo-Emancipation Policy and Its Silencing Effects on Queer Muslims," *Feminist Legal Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 144.

⁴⁰⁹ Judith Butler, "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time.," *The British Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 1 (2008): 3–4.

partners), as well as being used as an instrument of coercion to force the adoption of cultural norms.

The examples above illustrate how the Netherlands has made its 'homo-friendly' identity a tool of coercive nationalism, considering homosexual tolerance a key measure of integration and a precondition of citizenship. As in other European countries, an ostensibly progressive value - in this case homosexual acceptance - was used as a means of excluding and disciplining Muslims in a national project that identified Islam as the prime danger to social cohesion. Muslim homophobia was constructed along a binary axis of civility/barbarism in which the comments of imams were thought to be representative of the views of all Muslims, homophobia within Muslim communities was considered indicative of a cultural and religiously sanctioned backwardness, and homophobic attacks by Turkish and Moroccan youths were deemed emblematic of the failure of Muslim integration and the multicultural project.

The effects of this discourse were to shore up Dutch identity as Western, modern, tolerant and enlightened, in contrast to a premodern Muslim culture figured as incompatible and dangerous to the precarious freedoms won by gay people in the Netherlands. As Mepschen et al have pointed out, there was an irony in the way gay rights were heralded as if they had been the foundation of European culture for centuries. The 1998 Gay Games in Amsterdam had brought forth fierce debate and the condemnation and disgust of Dutch conservatives, who denounced the public display of sexuality in deeply homophobic terms. Columnist Gerry van der List condemned the games as 'an Amsterdam orgy' and argued that gay men led 'a horrendous lifestyle', yet three years later, following

El-Moumni's comments, 'Van der List had embraced gay rights as exemplary of "Western gains and ideals."' ⁴¹⁰

In locating the tolerance of homosexuality as a Western norm, homophobia became the exclusive domain of Muslims, a cultural malaise rather than an individual prejudice, and ethnic Dutch homophobia was rendered invisible. The state was then free to utilise a certain conception of freedom in order to discipline Muslims and compel them to shed their unacceptable cultural preconditioning. Judith Butler wryly hinted at this discursive change when she asked, referring to the integration abroad test, whether gay and lesbian people were being administered tests by the Dutch government to make sure they are not offended by the visible practices of Muslims.⁴¹¹ This is an important point, and highlights what Halleh Ghorashi has identified as a dual discourse of citizenship, where the 'real Dutch' are responsible citizens, while the 'unwanted Dutch' must be coerced by the state into behaving acceptably.⁴¹² In the present period, Muslims have become the unwanted Dutch: passive, immature subjects who must simply do as society dictates without being allowed to enter the debate or raise their voices. This discourse underwrites a national project that is based on the incompatibility of cultures and the need to assimilate all into a culturally fundamentalist notion of Dutchness, exemplified by the populist right's declarations of European cultural supremacism:

Why are we not allowed to say that Muslims should adapt to our way of life, because our standards and values are of a higher, better, more pleasant and

⁴¹⁰ Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens, "Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands," 967.

⁴¹¹ Butler, "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time.," 4.

⁴¹² Ghorashi, "Ayaan Hirsi Ali: Daring or Dogmatic? Debates on Multiculturalism and Emancipation in the Netherlands," 167–168.

more humane level? It is not about integration, it's about assimilation! At home they can wear their headscarves and slaughter their sheep; outside they have to behave like every Dutchman does.⁴¹³

While the acceptance of diverse sexualities is a value that most progressives would applaud, its use as a means of demonising Muslims in an Orientalist constellation of modern civility vs. barbaric traditionalism represents a perverse misuse of freedom for purposes of exclusion.

Coercive undressing and gender equality in France

In France, cultural anxiety over Islam has concentrated primarily on the symbolic threat represented by Islamic dress. Construction moments such as: the 2004 ban on religious symbols in schools, which focused primarily on Muslim girls' right to wear the hijab; the reaction to the New Anti-capitalist Party's fielding in the 2010 elections of 'veiled' candidate Ilham Moussaid; and the burqa ban in 2010, which criminalised the full body covering, illustrate what Vincent Geisser has described as French 'hijabophobia', where Islamic dress is represented as a danger to basic secular republican values.⁴¹⁴ The debates emerging from this aversion to the various veiling practices of Muslim women have been underpinned by the French legal principle of *laïcité*, the strict separation of (private) religion and the public sphere. Yet despite this central principle of the French Republic, it is striking to note the extent to which issues of gender equality and feminism have taken an integral role. This section focuses on the

⁴¹³ Geert Wilders, quoted in Peter C Hylarides, "Multiculturalism in the Netherlands and the Murder of Theo van Gogh," *Contemporary Review* 286, no. 1669 (2005): 76.

⁴¹⁴ Geisser, "Intellectual and Ideological Debates on Islamophobia: A 'French Specificity' in Europe?," 43–44.

centrality and instrumentalization of such arguments, which were employed to oppose Islamic veiling specifically to protect women's rights in France (particularly, though not exclusively, Muslim women's rights), and worked to shore up a particular version of French identity as enlightened and modern in contradistinction to backward and patriarchal Islam.

France has the largest Muslim population in Europe, but has historically been hostile to recognition of ethnic and religious identities, viewing individuals as French only and requiring social conformity as the price of political equality.⁴¹⁵ Anxieties about the extent to which Muslim women threatened the idea of an indivisible republic became evident in the 1980s as post-war migration, until then perceived as temporary and solely masculine, began to be viewed as permanent with the arrival of women and children through family reunification. As Muslim women became more visible in France, they became a political issue through a dual representation which identified them as both threatening to the Republic, because of their embodied attachment to, and transference of, Islamic practices, and as victims of the patriarchal dominance of Muslim men.⁴¹⁶ This ambiguous representation was apparent in then Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy's 2006 New Year's Day address to the nation, in which he spoke of the: 'immigrant woman, trapped at home, who doesn't speak the language because her husband doesn't let her leave and doesn't put her in contact with literacy groups or French lessons.'⁴¹⁷ As a victim the Muslim woman was prevented from being part of

⁴¹⁵ Fekete, *Islamophobia and Civil Rights in Europe*, 12.

⁴¹⁶ S.M. Skandrani, O. Taieb, and Marie Rose Moro, "Transnational Practices, Intergenerational Relations and Identity Construction in a Migratory Context: The Case of Young Women of Maghrebine Origin in France," *Culture & Psychology* 18, no. 1 (2012): 77–78.

⁴¹⁷ Quoted in Fekete, "Enlightened Fundamentalism? Immigration, Feminism and the Right," 6.

French society by her husband, but her isolation also endangered the integration of her children and thus threatened the future of France.

It is in this context that the debates surrounding the veil, which in France is used to mean any covering of the head or face, including the headscarf (hijab), face covering (niqab), and full body cover (burqa), have not only centred on the sacrosanct principle of *laïcité*, but also increasingly about patriarchal Islam and the need to rescue Muslim women from men's power. In this sense, feminist arguments have been appropriated for the purpose of targeting Muslim women, and emancipating them from their patriarchal culture. The veil is seen from this perspective as nothing more than a symbol of sexist Islam, and thus not only symbolic of Muslim women's oppression but also a challenge to gender equality in France. This discursive representation of veils as monolithically oppressive is illustrated by the fact that of 150 people invited to give testimony at the Stasi commission, convened in 2003 by Jacques Chirac to debate the proposed ban on the hijab in schools, only one (Saida Kada, founder of Activist French Muslim Women) was a veiled French Muslim woman.⁴¹⁸

The veil in France is viewed as a semiotic sign which symbolically announces the wearer's attachment to values that are incongruous with French commitment to gender equality and the values of autonomy and freedom. Yet, there is no objective violation of gender equality inherent in any type of veil. As Susanna Mancini has pointed out, it is merely a piece of fabric and there are no laws in Europe banning the right to wear any other type clothing, even when, as with

⁴¹⁸ Fekete, "Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State," 21.

high heels and tight trousers, it may actually harm health.⁴¹⁹ It is the subjective perception of the veil that causes difficulties in France (and elsewhere in Europe), based on its symbolic connotations. Covering the hair or face implies an unwillingness to engage in established protocols of interaction with the opposite sex, and thus provides a stark visual reminder of a different value system that, in the context of the discourse of the 'war on terror', has been constructed as oppositional and confrontational to the values of the West.⁴²⁰

The subjective understanding of veiling as intrinsically and predominantly symbolic of diametrically opposed understandings of gender relations, and specifically of the submissive role of women in Islam, has led to the discursive construction of any veil as dangerous to equality in France. This position, exemplified by the statements of feminists, asserts that no woman wears the veil autonomously, even if she believes she does. Thus the philosopher Elisabeth Badinter could stress that since the veil represented oppression, choosing to wear it was equal to renouncing personal autonomy.⁴²¹ As symbolic of the patriarchal values of Islam, a woman who embodied these values by covering a part of herself was thought to be publicly renouncing her rights, and in doing so signalling to society that equal rights with men were not important to her. This interpretation of the purpose of veiling has been used over and over in France to sustain limitations on women's rights to wear it, and was employed by President Sarkozy in June 2009, when he proposed the banning the burqa, stating: 'That is not the idea that the French republic has of women's dignity. The burqa is not a

⁴¹⁹ Susanna Mancini, "Patriarchy as the Exclusive Domain of the Other: The Veil Controversy, False Projection and Cultural Racism," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10, no. 2 (2012): 412.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁴²¹ Fekete, "Enlightened Fundamentalism? Immigration, Feminism and the Right," 17.

sign of religion, it is a sign of subservience.⁴²² Sarkozy's statement suggests that the burqa is *only* about gender relations, and the submissive position of women in Islam. Autonomy can therefore only be restored to such women by forcing them to uncover.

Wearing a burqa in public, or compelling someone else to do so, was banned in France in 2010, and the penalties imposed illustrate the centrality of the gender equality argument. Those breaking this law are required to pay a fine and attend a mandatory citizenship course. Susan Carland has claimed that penalties imposed indicate that the law addresses gender equality rather than secularism, highlighting that those who force others to cover are considered more problematic to the French government and have to pay one hundred times the fine (€15,000) of those who choose to cover (€150). The disparity in fines, she suggests, signals that it is women's rights that are being addressed, since the penalty would be equal for both offenders if secularism were the principle being defended.⁴²³ The difference in financial penalty suggests that the government has made provisions within the law for the presumed patriarchy of Islam by punishing more harshly those who force others to cover. Yet the assumed passivity of Muslim women, which lies at the heart of this two-tier penalty system, contains a paradox: Would not the power of these Muslim fathers, husbands and brothers be so great over these women that they could be coerced into claiming they had chosen to cover in order that dominant men escape the higher penalty? And with the implicit assumption at the heart of French debate that wearing a veil is a renunciation of one's autonomy, how can the covered

⁴²² Quoted in Carland, "Islamophobia, Fear of Loss of Freedom, and the Muslim Woman," 470.

⁴²³ Ibid., 469–470.

woman's views be trusted as her own? Could the testimony of a veiled woman ever be accepted?

The distrust of veiled Muslim women and the threat they were seen to represent to French gender relations was further exemplified by the reaction to the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) fielding of Ilham Moussaid in the 2010 elections. Moussaid, who covers her hair, has described herself as 'feminist, secular, and veiled,'⁴²⁴ yet her candidacy drew widespread criticism and led to an official complaint by rightwing feminist group *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (Nether Whores Nor Submissives), who stressed that her candidacy was evidence that: '...the NPA is perverting the values of the Republic and suggesting we re-read them in a manner which conforms with regressive visions of women.'⁴²⁵ This statement signals how the very presence of a veiled woman in the political sphere was thought to endanger France and French values, despite the fact that Moussaid stated continuously her commitment to feminists principles, including contraception and abortion rights, and her autonomous decision to cover her hair: 'Try as I might to explain that I am not oppressed and it shows, there is still a lack of understanding.'⁴²⁶

The dominant monolithic construction of the veil in France as a symbol of gender oppression silenced the voices of those women, like Ilham Moussaid, who claimed agency in their choice to cover some part of their body. While there is no doubt that in some societies Muslim women are subject to enforced dress codes, there is an increasingly assertive Muslim feminist perspective in the West which

⁴²⁴ Keshava Guha, "Gauche Politics: Radical Leftism Resurges in France," *Harvard International Review* Spring (2010): 10.

⁴²⁵ Lizzy Davies, "Election Candidate in Headscarf Causes Uproar in France," *The Guardian*, 10 February (2010), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/feb/10/french-election-headscarf-candidate> [Retrieved 5 October 2012].

⁴²⁶ Quoted in Ibid.

claims that covering, far from being oppressive, is actually an emancipatory practice that liberates women. Veiling, for some, represents freedom.⁴²⁷ Pnina Werbner, for example, has argued that through their religious observance veiled British Muslim women have opened up a space for autonomous decision making that includes the right to work, be educated, move around un-chaperoned in public and choose their own marriage partners.⁴²⁸ Interviews with French Muslim women have similarly shown that their reasons for wearing the headscarf differed significantly from mainstream French discourse that represented it as an oppressive religio-political symbol. Young French women of Moroccan descent opposed traditional patriarchal interpretations and argued that Islam advocates equality, authorises women to work and legitimises love marriages.⁴²⁹ The veil in this context may signal both attachment to traditional Moroccan culture and an assertive Islam which granted these women greater freedom, where their Muslim identity reassured their parents (who were often worried by their daughters' French affiliation) and their practice of Islam allowed them to negotiate a greater freedom and transgress other rules.⁴³⁰

The trajectory of Western feminism has been so entwined with the freedom to uncover that the use of a discourse of women's emancipation to underpin authoritarian practices which control (Muslim) women's bodies is considered by

⁴²⁷ As former Respect Party councillor, and headscarf wearing Muslim woman, Salma Yaqoob has stated: 'I think that Muslim women who wear hijab often feel that they are valued for their intellect rather than their looks, which is actually very liberating.', quoted in Natasha Walter, "When the Veil Means Freedom," *The Guardian*, 20 January, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/jan/20/france.schoolsworldwide1> [Retrieved 13 October 2012].

⁴²⁸ Werbner, "Veiled Interventions in Pure Space: Honour, Shame and Embodied Struggles among Muslims in Britain and France," 175.

⁴²⁹ Skandrani, Taieb, and Moro, "Transnational Practices, Intergenerational Relations and Identity Construction in a Migratory Context: The Case of Young Women of Maghrebine Origin in France," 85.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

many to be unproblematic. The liberatory discourses of the veil put forward by Muslim women are incongruent with mainstream discursive constructions which represent it as anti-emancipatory and monolithically oppressive. Based on an assumption that the only way to be liberated is to be uncovered, Muslim women who claim that sexual freedom is not the only or most important freedom a woman can have, and that it may actually not be true liberation at all, are silenced by a discourse that assures them they are deluding themselves and playing into the hands of patriarchal men. The effect of these discourses for French Muslim women who veil is, paradoxically, a restriction of their freedom. Renee Le Mignot, co-president of French NGO Against Racism and For Friendship Between Peoples has emphasised the increased discrimination against women who wear the headscarf, including their being refused access to voting booths and driving lessons, barred from their own wedding ceremonies in town halls, ejected from university classes, and in one case prevented from withdrawing cash from her own account at a bank counter.⁴³¹ The visual symbol of the veil, constructed as indicating a woman's lack of belonging to French society, thus invited discrimination and encouraged the treatment of covered women as lesser citizens.

The construction of European identity in opposition to Islam

The examples analysed above illustrate the extent to which national identities in the post 2001 period have been constructed in opposition to an imagined Muslim identity. In each case, certain 'Western' values that were thought to encapsulate

⁴³¹ Carland, "Islamophobia, Fear of Loss of Freedom, and the Muslim Woman," 470.

the identity of the nation were seized upon as timeless and essential characteristics and contrasted with 'Muslim values' that were oppositional and threatening. The debate about the suitability of Islamic architecture in Switzerland quickly mutated into a value-laden dispute about the place of Islam in Swiss society. Based on the notion that minarets were representative of unacceptable Islamic social models, the national virtue of tolerance was represented as being in direct competition with Muslim politico-religious power desires, and Swiss neutrality was deemed threatened by Islam's inability to relegate religion to the private sphere. Danish debates about 'The Face of Muhammad' cartoons similarly positioned a national commitment to freedom of expression as oppositional to a perceived Muslim demand that their religion be respected above all else. Muslims were represented as intolerant and authoritarian, incapable of understanding the liberal concept of press freedom, and prone to violent rage when provoked. Dutch sexual diversity was portrayed as deeply threatened by Muslims who could not shed their cultural predisposition to homophobia. The Netherlands was represented as possessing an excessive national tolerance that was endangered by Islamic intolerance and repression of sexual freedom. Finally, French debates over the right of Muslim women to cover coalesced around the threat that veiling practices were believed to pose to gender equality. The veil was constructed as symbolic of Muslim patriarchy and female oppression and thus a direct challenge to feminism and women's freedom in France. In every case, national values were represented as rational, enlightened and superior, and this hierarchical construction highlights the Eurocentric self-understanding that guided these discourses of national identity.

The internalisation of the civilised/barbaric dichotomy was central to the discursive creation of national identity for each state. This binary construction was used to designate the nation as modern, enlightened, rational and progressive, in opposition to an imagined Islam within its midst and outside its borders which was considered pre-modern, obscurantist, irrational and regressive. This bipolarity is a central construction of Eurocentrism, giving rise to identities which are deemed entirely oppositional and irreconcilable and containing a logic that demands the 'barbaric' is subsumed entirely into the 'civilised' as a condition of residence in Europe. This closing down of symbolic borders is evident in the discourses of those states which consider themselves immigration countries (France and the Netherlands), as well as traditional isolationists for whom immigration is a relatively new reality (Denmark and Switzerland).

The dominant discourses adopted worked to represent Muslims as monolithically opposed to whichever value was being nationally championed, and the superior values of the enlightened Europeans were instrumentalised as disciplinary tools in an authoritarian discourse that demanded Muslims shed their cultural impediments to modernity. The threat to Switzerland that Muslim social models were believed to pose was countered by prohibiting the construction of minarets. Danish discourse sought to protect free expression by condemning and silencing the freely expressed outrage of some Muslims. The Netherlands utilised a culturally racist discourse which considered anti-gay feeling inescapably inscribed in the mind-set of anyone with a Muslim background in order to discipline actual and potential Muslim citizens. And France sought to practice gender equality by silencing and excluding from French civic culture those

women who claimed that their freedom and equality could best be served by their own autonomous choice to cover whatever they saw fit.

Yet, it should be made clear that these discourses did not serve only as a means of excluding Muslims to forge national cultural homogeneity. Despite the varied starting points; tolerance (Switzerland), free expression (Denmark), (homo)sexual freedom (the Netherlands), and gender equality (France) are all ostensibly progressive values that were intrinsically linked and explicitly articulated as European and Western. The national discourses thus not only sought to exclude, but also provided pivotal ideals around which European belonging could be reaffirmed. This highlights the central place of the civilised/barbaric binary. Anti-Muslim feeling in Europe has a long history, but the Islamophobia that we are now witnessing is a product of and nourishes the post-September 11, 2001 international order and the discursive constructions of the 'war on terror'. In a world that was deliberately, discursively, and self-consciously structured by the appealing Manichean logic of 'with us or against us', to be 'with' is to be civilised, enlightened, and Western. The fluid boundaries of this identity are policed and fortified by values recognised as products of the European historical trajectory. In affirming these Eurocentric values, states affirm their belonging to the 'right' side in the 'war on terror'.

The understanding of such values as inherently Western requires that they be constantly reaffirmed as such, and this was achieved through a politicisation of culture and a culturalization of politics.⁴³² Culture is politicised when social and

⁴³² Gudrun Jensen, "To Be 'Danish', Becoming 'Muslim': Contestations of National Identity?," 389–390; Mason, Aroua, and Åberg, "Mediating Tensions over Islam in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland," 3.

political issues are linked to the essentialised culture of groups.⁴³³ This may be achieved in a negative sense, for instance by linking social problems such as 'ethnic ghettos', the low socio-economic status of immigrants and descendants, or crime to the culture of Muslims. It may also be positively politicised, through discourses which assert that political systems and values such as secularism, democracy and liberalism are the preserve of a particular culture. The culturalization of politics is a process whereby this essentialised notion of cultural difference is instrumentalised in a political project which seeks to discipline those cultures perceived as antithetical. Slavoj Žižek has stressed that this ideological operation constructs political differences, which are conditioned by inequality, into cultural differences through a process of naturalisation and neutralisation.⁴³⁴ This is illustrated by those national projects which, viewing Islam as contradictory to Western liberal democracy, employed culture as a means of exclusion through integration tests and the coercive assimilation of Muslims through civic training and the prohibition of Muslim practices.

By considering political systems to be cultural artefacts, and by using culture as a political disciplinary tool to mark the boundaries of the nation, the discourses delineated above advanced a Eurocentric notion of national identity. The ideological representation of these national values as the universal and progressive standards to which all the West aspires allowed states to cultivate a civilisational sense of belonging in their affirmation of European/Western values. These Eurocentric values were also used to mark the borders of identity, policing who could and could not belong to the community by interrogating their

⁴³³ Susan Wright, "The Politicization of 'Culture,'" *Anthropology Today* 14, no. 1 (1998): 10.

⁴³⁴ Slavoj Žižek, "Tolerance as an Ideological Category," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. Summer (2008): 660.

commitment to such values, based on culturalist notions of essential difference. In this sense, they were instrumentalised to exclude individuals and groups from belonging both to the (European) value community and to the national community that predicated its identity on these values.

There is, however, a central paradox at work in projects which seek to protect the freedom of some by sacrificing the liberty of others, and this underscores the superiority intrinsic to Eurocentric ideology. The impulse to authoritarianism was revealed in each nation's attempt to work through the problems perceived to be posed by Muslims and their inassimilable and oppositional cultural identities. Despite the fact that Muslims make up a significant percentage of Europe and its nations, the integration of Islam into European and individual national identity has been disregarded in favour of projects of national cultural chauvinism. Muslim voices and opinions, it seems, are not required by those who seek to define national identity. This underscores what Haleh Ghorashi has highlighted as the dual discourse of citizenship.⁴³⁵ Muslims are increasingly considered the passive 'unwanted Europeans', who must be coerced into acting as society dictates without being permitted input into the debate. Such practices contribute to the isolation of Muslims in Europe by refusing equal access to the shaping of national identities, and increase the perception of a cultural gulf by asserting a Eurocentrism which identifies Muslim values as oppositional, barbaric, and inferior, and therefore not worthy of discussion or integration into new European and national identities.

⁴³⁵ Ghorashi, "Ayaan Hirsi Ali: Daring or Dogmatic? Debates on Multiculturalism and Emancipation in the Netherlands," 7–9.

Conclusion

Matti Bunzl has emphasised that the question of civilisation lies at the heart of Islamophobia, which considers Islam to have a worldview fundamentally incompatible with Western civilisation.⁴³⁶ Unlike biological racism and anti-Semitism, it functions less in the interests of national purification than as a means of fortifying Europe, by questioning whether Muslims, with their alternative civilisation and mind-set, can be European at all. Each of the discourses studied in this chapter has posed the same question through the identification and reification of a particular 'European' value as sacrosanct and endangered by Muslims and their practices. These European values were represented as modern, rational and superior, in contrast to traditional, irrational, and inferior Muslim values. The civilised/barbaric binary central to Eurocentric discourse thus created the conditions for discriminatory and exclusionary practices, allowing for ostensibly positive values to be instrumentalised in order to quash alternative identity conceptions that were represented as dangerous and threatening to the solidarity and cohesion of the nation.

This chapter has analysed the discursive construction of Islam as antithetical to national identity in Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands and France by focusing on construction moments in which Muslim identity was politicised as irreconcilably 'other' to the nation's conception of itself. In emphasising the Eurocentric assumptions that have upheld narratives of national identity, the aim has been to illustrate the discursive mechanisms by which such identities have been ideologically constructed. By demonstrating alternative positions that challenge the dominant narratives I have attempted to de-naturalise the logic of

⁴³⁶ Bunzl, "Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe," 502.

these discourses and highlight the subjectivities that are silenced by the constrictions inherent in these binaries. My intention has not been to suggest that each nation considers Islam as a threat in the same way or to the same extent. Islamophobia is in each case subject to national particularities, and the varying construction moments and their accompanying discourses illustrate the extent to which different conceptions of Islam's otherness were instrumentalised. Yet noting that Islamophobia is not homogenous across Europe should not blind one to the Eurocentric suppositions that sustain these narratives of identity. As David Theo Goldberg has pointed out, Islam is viewed in the dominant European imaginary to represent a collection of lacks: of freedom, civility, and equal respect for women and gays.⁴³⁷ In contrast, the West is considered to hold these values in abundance. The binary of Western values/Islamic values thus provides a vast tapestry of oppositions from which to cherry pick in times of identity crisis and a bounty of discourses which may be instrumentalised to discipline and exclude those who are considered to occupy the inferior side of this civilisational border.

When Anders Behring Breivik attempted in July 2011 to 'start a revolution' in Europe, he was drawing upon the very same conceptions of identity that have been discussed in this chapter. Viewing his actions as the precursor to a long war which would wrest the very soul of European civilisation from the clutches of Muslims, his justifications employed an identical civilised/barbaric binary that viewed Western society as existentially endangered by the presence of Islam. Breivik's actions should caution us to the dangers of stark binaries that essentialise culture and employ it as a coercive tool in projects of national

⁴³⁷ Goldberg, "Racial Europeanization," 345.

hegemony. His violent solution to the problem perceived to be posed by Muslims in Europe is only the extreme end of a spectrum of exclusionary and discriminatory practices made possible by Eurocentric discourse.

Chapter Seven – Theorising Islamophobia

Introduction

All of the discourses explored in this thesis have in common the cultural problematisation of Muslims. This can be understood as the central organising principle that holds together the diverse enunciations and practices that fall under the rubric of Islamophobic discourse. The previous chapters have sought to demonstrate how Islamophobia functions as a culturally racist discourse, by problematizing Muslim culture and with ideological effects that disadvantage Muslims and advantage non-Muslims. The present chapter aims to understand why this discourse has such salience at the present historical moment and how it serves those who employ it.

Understanding Islamophobia as cultural racism implies that there is more going on than merely a prejudicial stance against Muslims. As an ideology, racism (in whatever form it may take at any given historical moment) performs particular functions for those employing its discourse and practices. Islamophobia is no exception, and the functions it performs are related to an understanding of (culturally) racialized space. Whether it appears at the local, national or international level, Islamophobia emerges from a cultural anxiety generated by the notion that previously Western spaces are being undermined by the presence of Muslims. Those who employ this discourse consider that their previously special relationship with a particular territory is now under strain because of

Muslim presence, and they use Islamophobia as a means of re-gaining control over the objects (Muslims) which block their identity as Western subjects.

In his 2000 book *White nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*, Ghassan Hage explored this territory in relation to nationalism, arguing that both those considered 'racist' and those considered 'multiculturalist' share in common the conviction that they are masters of the national space and it is up to them to decide who stays and who ought to be kept out of that space.⁴³⁸ Hage argues that this is a fantasy of white supremacy, the belief in white mastery over the nation and the conception that ethnic minorities are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to white national will.⁴³⁹ This understanding of race relations as an expression of nationalism centres the notion of territorial power as a motivating ideology. Hage contends that racist practices are better conceived as nationalist practices, which assume first, an image of national space, second, an image of the nationalist as master of this space and third, an objectified image of the ethnic other within this space.⁴⁴⁰

Although Hage discusses Muslims as 'ethnic others' within the nation, his specific focus is racist practices and how they are better conceptualised as nationalist practices. I wish to extend his theoretical position specifically in relation to Islamophobia, and in doing so I argue that something greater than national identity is at stake. While nationalist practices do inform many Islamophobic discourses, a larger understanding is at work that situates local and national expressions of Islamophobia in a more global context. Islamophobia entails not only the understanding that Muslims block the special relationship

⁴³⁸ Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 17.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

between locals and their localities, nationalists and their nation, but also the conception that Muslims' existence within the West problematizes the privileged relationship between Westerners and the imagined *civilizational* space of the West.

This global dimension of Islamophobia can be understood as an expression of resurgent Eurocentrism, which aims to reconstitute threatened spaces through a subject/object dichotomy in which Western subjects are positioned as the cultural managers of local, national and global territories, while Muslims are constructed as objects whose presence changes or contaminates the fantasised ideal spaces appealed to.

The present chapter first considers the spatial dimension of Islamophobia, before going on to analyse how the Muslim undesirable is constructed within this discourse as spatially threatening to particular territories. Islamophobia operates as a discourse of control that works to put Muslims in their place as local, national and civilisational objects to be directed by subjects whose claims on the territories in question are considered greater. Both exclusionary and inclusive discourses explicitly and implicitly draw upon the articulation of spatial dominance, and it is in this sense that Islamophobia can be best understood as Eurocentrism. Though the assertion that Western values are superior and the demand that Muslims integrate in to them, Islamophobia provides its adherents with a means of reconstituting their privileged relationship with the territories that Muslims are perceived to threaten.

The spatial dimension of Islamophobia

They talk of integration, but they are the ones not wanting to integrate, they alone wish to take over! They believe their religion is the best and refuse to accept other religions, so why should we allow the Muslim community to trample all over our historic market town of Dudley?⁴⁴¹

Islam is not just a religious system, but a political and social ideology that seeks to dominate all non-believers and impose a harsh legal system that rejects democratic accountability and human rights. It runs counter to all that we hold dear within our British liberal democracy...⁴⁴²

For the first time in a generation there is an unease, an anxiety, even at points a resentment that our very openness, our willingness to welcome difference, our pride in being home to many cultures, is being used against us; abused, indeed, in order to harm us.⁴⁴³

The quotes above are taken from radically different sites, enunciate very different perspectives, and have different purposes. The first is a letter to the Editor in the local newspaper *Dudley News*, the second is from the English Defence League's Mission Statement, and the third is from Prime Minister Tony Blair's speech, *A duty to integrate*, which discussed integration in the context of the 7 July 2005 London bombings. What the three have in common is an understanding of a space of values and heritage that is threatened by the presence of Muslims, and a shared conviction amongst these diverse speakers that they have the right to decide the values of the spaces they seek to protect. It is this spatial dimension of Islamophobia that I wish to explore.

⁴⁴¹ Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 2 February 2007.

⁴⁴² EDL, "EDL Mission Statement."

⁴⁴³ Tony Blair, "A Duty to Integrate. Speech on Multiculturalism and Integration. 8 December," *No. 10: The Official Site of the British Prime Minister's Office*, 2006, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10563> [Retrieved 14 February 2011].

In each of the above statements the word 'our' was used to denote a relationship that the speaker felt he or she had with a given territory. Whether local, for the *Dudley News* correspondent, or national, for the EDL and Blair, this territory was considered in some way endangered by Muslims.⁴⁴⁴ In each case Muslims were presented as destructive (trampling over our history, dominating non-believers, harming us) and antagonistic (refusing to accept other religions, rejecting British liberal democracy, exploiting our openness to other cultures). For each of these speakers, Muslims occupy the position of 'the undesirable'.

Constructed as undesirables, Islamophobic discourse represents Muslims as the group which blocks the relationship between speakers and the territories imagined as theirs. Each of the speakers appealed to fantasy space rife with positive attributes (a historic market town, a dearly held British liberal democracy, a nation that is an open and welcoming haven for all cultures) – spaces which had, in the past, been infused with positive ideals, but whose goodness was now endangered by a Muslim presence that threatened the continued achievement of these ideals. The above examples also underscore the proprietorial relationship that speakers believe they have with the space to which they refer. By employing a discourse which fantasised a space once infused with positivity, now threatened by Muslim presence, each speaker claimed some sort

⁴⁴⁴ Tony Blair's speech was touted as the official government position on British multiculturalism following the 7 July 2005 London bombings, and his speech was quite explicit in its targeting of Muslims as the problematic community about which he is speaking: 'It is true there are extremists in other communities. But the reason we are having this debate is not generalised extremism. It is a new and virulent form of ideology associated with a minority of our Muslim community. It is not a problem with Britons of Hindu, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese or Polish origin. Nor is it a problem with the majority of the Muslim community. Most Muslims are proud to be British and Muslim and are thoroughly decent law-abiding citizens. But it is a problem with a minority of that community, particularly originating from certain countries'. Ibid.

of special relationship with that space, which justified his or her perceived right to decide what it should be like.⁴⁴⁵

Hage argues that the undesirability of a group presupposes an idealised image of a territory – a fantasy space in which the undesirable group is perceived as blocking the positive identity of the ideal territory.⁴⁴⁶ Islamophobic discourse implicitly understands some relationships with a particular territory to be more legitimate than others - specifically it understands that Muslims have fewer rights over local and national spaces in Britain than non-Muslims. This can be understood as a form of spatial dominance, in which those non-Muslims who employ Islamophobic discourse believe that they have managerial rights over a territory; a feeling of entitlement to decide what this territory should be like, who belongs there and who should be removed.⁴⁴⁷

The Muslim undesirable

This conceptualisation of Islamophobic discourse as a response to perceived spatial threat foregrounds its function, permitting a greater understanding of its usefulness to those employing it. As an ideological tool it aims to explain the

⁴⁴⁵ It is an entirely reasonable objection to point out that Tony Blair, as Prime Minister, had at this point a democratically elected right to decide how the nation should be. However, Blair positioned himself in this speech not simply as the leader of a nation, but as a subject whose concern for the fulfilment of national goodness was normal, natural and something that all fellow nationals should share. The intention of his speech was to explain and gain support for the changes to immigration and integration policies that followed the 7 July 2005 bombings, and as such, his speech was an attempt to draw some national subjects in to the nation, through appealing to its positive attributes and inviting them to claim these as part of their identity, at the same time as marking out a risky Muslim community that endangered their national realisation. In this sense, Blair was opening up the national terrain to other subjects as a territory whose future should be cherished. His speech represented an attempt to encourage British nationals that the nation was of value, at the same time as singling out Muslims as the community which stood in the way of the realisation of the national fantasy to which he appealed.

⁴⁴⁶ Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 39.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

world as it is and as it should be, and each instance of Islamophobic discourse analysed in the preceding chapters has used this ideological understanding in order to reconstitute a formerly privileged and now endangered spatial relationship. But why are Muslims considered to pose such a problem to the spaces in question?

Part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that it is not individual Muslims who are considered to be so threatening. Rather, the anxiety is caused by the perception of a large Muslim minority with an identical Muslim cultural will. Appreciating the culturally racist aspects of Islamophobia is essential to understanding why Muslims are considered to be the group that frustrates the realisation of the ideal territory imagined by those employing this discourse.

There is widespread agreement that there has been a transformation in racist discourse since the end of the Second World War, from overtly biological understandings of race to a focus on culture.⁴⁴⁸ Cultural racism employs many of the tropes of biological racism but averts its attention from race, blood and biology, to focus instead on the cultural heritage of groups and individuals. Although this discourse rarely mentions the word race, its essentialisation of culture performs the same function. The focus on the deterministic and inescapable culture of a group in terms of beliefs, habits, behaviours and values institutes a hierarchical understanding, within which individuals are naturalised as subjects of superior or inferior cultures which regulate their abilities, attributes and psychology. Islamophobic discourse asserts that a Western subject, socialised within a cultural form that cherishes freedom, equality and liberalism,

⁴⁴⁸ Grosfoguel and Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction"; Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?" ; Durrheim and Dixon, "Theories of Culture in Racist Discourse."

has imbibed Western values into his or her very being. Conversely, Muslim subjects, socialised within a culture of inferior Islamic values (submission to Allah above all else, clinging to premodern traditions and values) are unable to move beyond the strictures of Islamic thought. From the perspective of cultural racism, Muslims will always revert to Islam as the guide for their thought processes and behaviour.

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the essentialisation of Muslim culture as a driver of behaviour is what makes up the fundamental nature of Islamophobia. Yet, as Hage points out, one can believe that Muslims are essentially different, even inferior, and not act upon this belief.⁴⁴⁹ The imperative for action within the ideological world of Islamophobia comes not from an understanding that Muslims are radically different, but from an understanding that their presence is undesirable and harmful to the wellbeing of non-Muslims. If one understands Muslim culture as being determining, then it does not necessarily follow that individual Muslims are particularly problematic.⁴⁵⁰ The problematisation of Muslims comes about when their group presence is seen to threaten the way that things are, based on the perception that Muslim will is widespread, unified, and antagonistic. If Muslims are understood to exercise an Islamic will, then the greater the number of Muslims in a particular territory, the more anxiety will be generated by the possibility that there exists a potential bloc

⁴⁴⁹ Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 32.

⁴⁵⁰ This paradox continually arises in the discourses I have analysed. Individual Muslims are often referred to in positive ways, yet this positivity is rarely extended to Muslims as a group. For example, the EDL, whose discourse I have taken as Islamophobia *par excellence*, continually assert that they have no issue with individual Muslims, who are usually 'perfectly pleasant people'. EDL, "Life in the UK Is Generally Pretty Good." Nonetheless, the deviant behaviour of some Muslims is represented as culturally determined, arising from *Islamic* tradition and scripture, and thus potentially representative of all Muslims: 'Of course, not all Muslims are terrorists, but all Muslims ARE suspect.' Ibid.; EDL, "EDL Featured in BBC Documentary."

of culturally determined Muslims that may alter the territory to their advantage and to the disadvantage of non-Muslims.

The construction of Muslims as undesirables within Islamophobic discourse always involves a cultural anxiety.⁴⁵¹ This anxiety is not necessarily caused by the belief that Muslims are radically different or inferior, which can exist independently of the need to vocalise or act upon such a belief. Rather, it is the fear that Muslims might change who we are, or the space in which we live, that forms an imperative for Islamophobic acts of discursive or physical exclusion.⁴⁵²

The Dudley mosque debates serve to illustrate this point. The mosque caused such anxiety in Dudley not because it represented any real threat to Dudley itself, but because of how it symbolically represented the changing face of the locality. The anxiety of those locals who petitioned *Dudley News* with their views about the undesirability of the mosque was saturated with symbolism, and the idea that the mosque represented was more worrying than its actual existence. This is why a central debate at the time concerned the size of the minaret and fears that it would be higher than the spire of the Church of St Thomas. Local people saw in the mosque Muslim will and ability to transform the landscape, and considered the preservation of Dudley as it is was preferable to the economic investment that the mosque complex would have generated. The maintenance of a privileged cultural relationship with Dudley led those opposed to the mosque to

⁴⁵¹ R.D. Grillo argues that cultural anxiety should not be considered merely a society wide moral panic about particular racialised cultures, but is more an anxiety about 'our' culture and what is happening to it. This suggests that there is a dualism within cultural racism that, in establishing cultures as natural, deterministic and boundaried, works to concentrate attention on the ways some cultures are contaminated or blemished by the negative effects of being in close contact with other, inferior cultures. R. D. Grillo, "Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety," *Anthropological Theory* 3, no. 2 (2003): 165.

⁴⁵² Marranci discusses this in relation to the fear of true multiculturalism that Islamophobia implies. Marranci, "Multiculturalism, Islam and the Clash of Civilisations Theory: Rethinking Islamophobia," 115–116.

act against their own local economic interests, preferring to stem Muslim cultural will in order to preserve these privileged relationships at the expense of a better economic future for the area. When not exercising a specifically Islamic cultural will, Muslims are not considered dangerous or threatening. It was the possibility that Muslims would change the locality, and by consequence, the locals, that drove the anxiety witnessed during the Dudley mosque controversy.

This fear that the local or national landscape may be changed also helps to explain why Muslims are so relentlessly focused upon. If, as I have argued, Islamophobia is cultural racism, and therefore has the potential to be applied to any culture considered drastically different, then why does Islamophobia have such appeal at the present historical moment? If the terrain of exclusion centres on values, why are Muslims singled out as such a threat, as opposed to other cultural or religious minorities such as Hindus or Sikhs?

The typical answer offered to this question is that Muslims are more culturally antagonistic than other minority groups. In order to unpack this claim, it is useful to consider the example of British Sikhs. Many of the claims made of Muslim culture could be extended to Sikh culture. British Sikhs are clustered in certain residential areas in much the same way that British Muslims are, due to the racialized housing policies which segregated immigrant groups during the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁵³ There is a strong symbolic difference between Sikhs and non-Sikhs, manifested in styles of dress, such as covering the hair, the bangle, and the carrying of the *kirpan*, as well as observation of festivals and religiously forbidden activities such as eating meat and eggs. In addition, cultural issues that affect the South Asian population more generally, such as forced and arranged

⁴⁵³ Phillips, "Parallel Lives? Challenging Discourses of British Muslim Self-Segregation," 27.

marriages, 'honour' killings, and the status of women, are potentially equally applicable to Sikhs. Many of the issues that are believed to signal Muslim difference and supposed Muslim inassimilability are directly analogous to the Sikh population of Britain. Why then are Sikhs not considered dangerous in the same way? Why is Sikh difference containable?

I venture that the answer to this question lies in the relative power of Sikhs, both within the UK and in the world. Sikhs are considered a containable minority precisely because they are a small minority, while Islam, in contrast, is experiencing both national and global resurgence. Muslims are considered dangerous not because of something inherently antagonistic about Muslim culture, but because they are considered actually or potentially powerful, and since Muslims are consistently the group which is worse off in almost all national indicators of multiple deprivation,⁴⁵⁴ their perceived power must lie in their numbers. The anxiety that drives Islamophobia is caused by the perception of a demographically increasing Muslim population and a unified Muslim cultural will, and it is this sense that 'we' have lost, or are about to lose, control that feeds the apocalyptic fantasies of individuals like Anders Breivik and groups such as the EDL and Stop the Islamization of Europe (SIOE).⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Ceri Peach, "Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and Economic Disadvantage," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 4 (2006): 648.

⁴⁵⁵ This fantasy makes up the 'Eurabia' thesis, which proposes that Muslims are involved in the cultural colonisation of Europe through fifth column tactics. Jelle Van Buuren, "Spur To Violence?," *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3, no. 4 (2013): 205–215. The standard argument used to counter the claims I have made is that the Sikh community, in Britain and the world, do not pose a terrorist threat. Contrary to this position, there is ample evidence that Sikh militant movements operate from Western states in a transnational capacity. See, for example, Maryam Razavy, "Sikh Militant Movements in Canada," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 79–93. However, the fact that Sikh terrorism exists does not adequately answer this criticism. When individuals explain their discomfort with Muslims because of terrorism they are essentialising Muslim culture as predisposed to violent extremism, and rationalising the general distrust of Muslims because of the actions of some. This argument is only structurally sound

The discursive reconstitution of privileged spaces

My argument so far has emphasised the spatial dimension of Islamophobia, illustrating how the discourse articulates privileged spaces which are considered under threat from Muslim undesirables who do not or will not recognise the specifically non-Muslim character of these spaces. Islamophobia operates as a discourse of control to re-articulate these spaces as closed to cultural change by Muslims, through both exclusionary and inclusive discourses that re-emphasise the incontrovertible (non-Muslim) values of a particular territory. The following section aims to explain why speakers who employ this discourse attempt to control Muslims. If Islamophobia is understood as a discourse of control, then to what end is it used?

Islamophobic discourse works to reconstitute the imagined privileged relationship that those employing this discourse believe they have with a particular territory. Islamophobia is thus not just a means of controlling Muslims, but a means of reinstating spatial dominance. It is a discourse that works to restore the fantasised authority of non-Muslims over Muslims in spaces imagined as theirs.

Ghassan Hage conceptualises this operation within nationalist practice as the white nation fantasy, in which immigrants or 'third world looking people' are relegated to the position of national object through problematisation of their presence.⁴⁵⁶ Hage argues that the integration debate performs a socio-

within the context of essentialised cultural racism, whereby Muslim culture is believed to justify, or in some way incline individuals to, acts of terrorism.

⁴⁵⁶ Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 233–235.

anthropological function for those who subscribe to this fantasy, giving them the illusion of power to decide the make-up of the nation and positioning them in a supervisory role with the capability to decide how much and what type of integration is desirable. At a time when widespread cynicism with electoral politics leaves individuals feeling powerless to change national policy through the political process, the immigration and multiculturalism debates become a ritualised alternative. The impotence of conventional political engagement is alleviated through the institutionalised form of the integration debates, and provides ordinary white people with a means of reproducing their sense of control over the nation and its destiny.⁴⁵⁷

Islamophobia accomplishes a similar function by giving non-Muslims the illusion of control over local, national and civilizational spaces through the performative enactment of the discourse. By problematizing Muslims as endangering privileged relationships with particular territories, Islamophobia provides its adherents with a discursive means of reconstituting that fractured relationship. The following section explores in greater detail the means by which speakers employ both exclusionary and inclusive Islamophobic discourse for the purpose of reconstructing privileged relationships, and how the local, national and civilizational levels interplay in this ideological operation.

Reconstituting privileged spaces: Exclusionary Islamophobia

Exclusionary Islamophobia at the local level

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 240–241.

The ideology of Islamophobia problematizes its targets culturally, and for that reason it may be equally articulated to local, national and international/civilizational contexts. Through the identification of Muslims as the problematic objects which prevent an idealised space being the way it should be, Islamophobic discourse attempts to restore the (fantasised) authority of non-Muslims to re-make that space discursively and decide its values and culture. For this reason, the local, national and civilizational levels within Islamophobic discourse are heavily intertwined. Privileged relationships with local spaces often include articulations of the ideal nation, as well as a civilizational understanding of where that nation, and the locality in question, belongs. In letters to the Editor of *Dudley News*, correspondents tied the construction of the mosque to the destruction not just of Dudley's culture and heritage, but of English culture more generally:

Dudley has a long history of iron and steel, coal, limestone works, chain making etc. Our proud ancestors built the town through its industry and off the backs of manual labour. Our grandparents – men, women and children – grafted and broke their backs for long, hard days... Are we expected to sit back and allow our culture and heritage to be dismantled bit by bit until we end up with something that barely resembles England, let alone a Black Country town?⁴⁵⁸

Through the appeal to homely imagery, heritage, tradition and an idealised past, speakers connected local landscapes to treasured national ideals. Muslims were constructed within this fantasy as the significant other whose presence and

⁴⁵⁸ Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 8 August 2008.

demands effectively dismantled dearly held traditions and blocked the achievement of the imagined and idealised local and national space.

Such utterances illustrate more than merely a fear of change. In their appeals to almost apocalyptic fantasies, speakers expressed a profound dread of Muslim presence and symbols, based on an overinflated and exaggerated understanding of Muslim power. The fear was not change itself, but reflected a deep anxiety that Muslim power had the potential to reverse traditional dominance, to the detriment of the traditionally dominant. The consistent reiteration that Muslim power must not be left unchecked underscores the notion that there are natural managers of particular spaces who are *able* to check this power, and must do so before roles are reversed. It is the naturalness of this managerial cultural position that is perceived as threatened by Muslim demands.

Appeals to Dudley culture and tradition must be seen through this lens if we are to understand why Islamophobia has such sway at this moment in time. When speakers appealed to the heritage of Dudley, therein lay an understanding that this history was implicitly not Muslim. As 'natural Dudleians', correspondents exercised local cultural capital, a construction that pivoted on their attempts to situate themselves as the bearers of Dudley's past and the legitimate owners of its future. Islamophobic discourse was a means by which to make a claim of ownership on the local landscape, and served to legitimise the speaker's claims to represent Dudley. The discussions of Dudley's past were more than an idealised history of monolithic Dudley culture. They were a claim to the right to have an opinion on the cultural landscape of Dudley that only those who believed themselves to be the legitimate bearers of its culture felt able to make.

The fear that time is running out is present in Islamophobic discourse in an almost hysterical manner, but at its core this anxiety is related to the ability to stem the tide of Muslim power, believed to be increasing as Muslims make more and more culturally specific demands.

I seriously think if this mosque goes ahead it's the beginning of the end of our identity as a Christian country and I won't have Father Christmas in stores to take my niece to see and any grandchildren I might have. *Like-minded people should get together before it's too late.*⁴⁵⁹ [Emphasis added].

As the above quote illustrates, the narrative that time is running out rests on the notion that control is being lost by the natural managers of a privileged local space, and also acts as a call to action before the positions of dominance are unalterably reversed. In the demand to do something 'before it's too late' lies the fantasy of cultural power to stem the tide of role reversal. It is a fantasy because it bestows an illusory power on to the imagined, culturally coherent, 'real' Dudleians. The Islamophobic discourse of the Dudley mosque debate attempted to resolve the identity crisis of those who employed it by restoring imagined power over the cultural landscape of the locality.

The above quotes have in common an understanding of Dudley as part of a larger conglomerate. It was understood not just as part of the Black Country or Britain, but also as West European town, and thus rightfully heir to the cultural heritage of the West. This helps to explain why correspondents drew upon civilizational discourse, which constructed Dudley's Muslims as part of a

⁴⁵⁹ Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 2 October 2006.

threatening and dangerous global Islamic community and represented mosques as inexorably linked with terrorism and disorder.⁴⁶⁰ This discourse functioned not only to present an apparently rational opposition to the mosque's construction, but also provided a broader psychological resolution to the identity crisis brought about by the perception that power relations were being re-drawn. Dudley's natural Western belonging enabled correspondents to invoke all the positive attributes (of freedom, civilization, modernity, progress, and superiority) attached to Western identity and claim it for the locality.

This exercise in civilizational capital accumulation is particularly important for individuals who are not perceived to 'naturally' belong to the spaces in question. For those whose skin colour or background marks them out as having been born or descended from the non-West, belonging is not natural and unquestioned but something that must be accrued and articulated.⁴⁶¹ One way of doing this is to draw a line between oneself and the undesirable:

I am a Sikh. I will not be using this mosque, nor will my children, friends, relatives, neighbours, work colleagues or anyone else I know. Do you ever see a Muslim coming out of a church, temple or any other religious place? They just want to make a stand that they have power over Dudley and England... England is a small beautiful country, stop spoiling it with these hideous buildings... They just want power over the world. We want to keep

⁴⁶⁰ For example: 'The continuing building of these mosques must be a real threat to our country's security because you can't fail to notice on every single raid for terrorists and arms the search starts and ends at their front door.' Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 24 July 2007; '... some Muslims are indeed bogey men, who use mosques to train and indoctrinate less informed Muslims to walk alongside decent members of society, including fellow Muslims, and detonate their bombs as they did on 21/7.' Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 7 March 2007; 'It could be another breeding ground for Islamic terrorists and the people's concerns need to be heard.' Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007.

⁴⁶¹ Riley, "How to Accumulate National Capital: The Case of the 'Good' Muslim," 60.

Dudley, not change its name and culture to Islamabad. Wake up Dudley, don't let this happen.⁴⁶²

The above quote illustrates how local, national and civilizational capital was accumulated by individuals whose belonging may have been in question. The correspondent, Mrs Kaur, distinguished herself from Muslims by invoking their problematic presence in Dudley, England and the world. Since her Sikh heritage meant that belonging was not automatic, she employed Islamophobic discourse to entrench her own position on the right side of the West/Islam divide and stake her own claim to Western belonging.

Islamophobic discourse always appeals to larger narratives in order to reconstitute a privileged civilizational place for its adherents. The Dudley mosque debate amply demonstrated that the construction of Muslims as possessing a unified cultural will has consequences beyond an abstract understanding of the dangerous 'Islamic world'. Dudley's Muslims were punished for the crimes of their fellow religious adherents, held to account as subjects of a backward religion and viewed as furthering the most apocalyptic of agendas.

The fear of being dominated by Muslims, consistently articulated during the Dudley mosque debate, is a central trope of exclusionary Islamophobia.⁴⁶³ Why were correspondents so afraid that the construction of a mosque would result in the Muslim domination of Dudley? It is easy to dismiss these anxieties as exaggerated paranoia and fear of change, but this fails to grasp the underlying

⁴⁶² Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 22 February 2007.

⁴⁶³ Several of the correspondents expressed this fear, for example: 'We wish to keep our heritage and retain our nationality and not be dominated by another faith' Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 16 October 2006; 'It is also part of their [Muslims'] culture to try to dominate and intimidate wherever they live. And that's exactly what Khurshid Ahmed [chairman of Dudley Muslim Association] and his cronies are trying to do!' Letter to the Editor, *Dudley News*, 12 August 2007.

crisis of dominance that Islamophobia expresses. The anxiety communicated by this trope is that existing patterns of 'natural' dominance in particular spaces will be imminently reversed, and non-Muslims will soon be dominated by an alien faith. This worry expresses both an understanding that relations of domination and subordination are the natural order of things, and the profound dread that if Muslims are emerging from the position of subordination, non-Muslims will soon occupy that position.

The relation between dominant and subordinated is the subject/object construction of Eurocentrism.⁴⁶⁴ The fear of being dominated, as expressed by opponents to Dudley mosque, is a fear of being objectified; a fear of losing one's subjectivity and managerial rights and becoming an object to be moved and directed. Eurocentrism relies on a domination/subordination binary that can produce only two identities – a Western subject who dominates and a non-Western object which is subordinated. When the subordinated begin to contest their constructed identity as objects - when they articulate a subjectivity that has not been tendered by the naturally dominant subjects of a territory - the stability of the established Eurocentric binary is challenged and requires a hegemonic articulation.

The various expressions of Islamophobia during the Dudley mosque debate may be viewed as a hegemonic articulation of Eurocentrism, an attempt to close the gap being opened up by Muslims who were perceived as not merely demanding cultural recognition from the traditionally dominant, but also claiming an *equal* right to a stake in the cultural values of Dudley. The identity crisis

⁴⁶⁴ Edgardo Lander, "Eurocentrism, Modern Knowledges, and the 'Natural' Order of Global Capital," *Nepantla: Views From the South* 3, no. 2 (2002): 246.

brought about by the expression of Muslim subjectivity was resolved through Islamophobia, a discursive means to reconquer the territory in question and restore to dominance the cultural will of Dudley's 'natural' managers at the same time as providing a means by which the latter could bolster their claim to authority by accumulating local, national and civilizational capital.

Exclusionary Islamophobia at the national level

As the discourse of the Dudley mosque debate employed Eurocentric understandings to rebuff Muslim requests for cultural recognition and reposition subjects in their 'natural' positions, the English Defence League articulated its Islamophobia according to the same mental model. Although the EDL's stark reductionism meant that almost every Muslim related issue was considered illustrative of widespread 'Islamic extremism', the group merged local, national and international spaces in the same way as the correspondents to *Dudley News*, and claimed these spaces as rightfully belonging to non-Muslim cultural custodians.

The English Defence League took a special interest in the case of the proposed mosque in Dudley, holding three protests in the town and publishing several articles in *EDL News*. Discussing Dudley council's rejection of the full plans for the mosque in September 2011, *EDL News* stated:

Dudley is important because it sends a clear and very loud message to Islam in Britain. It says *you will not dictate to us how and what we should build in our country*. We will not be dictated to by a minority with an agenda to destroy us culturally and we will not allow you to destroy the

architectural style and heritage of this country with Arabic monstrosities.⁴⁶⁵

[Emphasis added].

Referring to the mosque as monstrous, Muslims were positioned as agents of destruction; of British culture, national heritage and even the architectural style of the country. The appeal to homely imagery was once again articulated, with deeply held national traditions represented as threatened by Muslim demands.

Yet, a deeper anxiety runs through this extract. The EDL feared being 'dictated to' by Muslims in their own country. Muslims were identified as an antagonistic out-group within a mental model that understood Muslim power to be generally increasing. The council's decision was seen as so important by the EDL because it represented the claiming back of this power from Muslims, and a restoration of the natural dominance of non-Muslims. The refusal of planning permission by the council for a second time had a symbolic meaning for the group, sending a clear message to Islam in Britain and having importance beyond the confines of the locality in which the mosque would have been built. The rejection of the mosque was understood in an ideological universe in which any and every obstruction of Muslim demands was considered a victory for non-Muslims.

This construction of Muslims and non-Muslims as inevitably locked in a battle for power and control of local, national and international space, explains the EDL's constant reductionism of all Muslim action to the ideology of 'Islamic extremism'. From this perspective the EDL constantly reiterate that Islam was engaged in a global battle for supremacy. The same article stated:

⁴⁶⁵ EDL, "Dudley Mosque Defeat," *EDL News*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/dudley-mosque-defeat/> [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

It raises the question why they [Dudley Muslims] need such a large mosque anyway? Could it have something to do with the cultural and stealth jihad being waged by Wahabbist Islam? Wherever Islam comes into contact with an alien culture, Islam seeks to dominate, replace and eventually eradicate. We've seen it in North Africa which was once the spiritual, theological and philosophical centre of Christianity in the 7th Century. Where are the great churches built during those times? They were destroyed by Islam of course.⁴⁶⁶

The fear of being dominated is again present in this extract. Tying up local, national and international space, EDL Islamophobia understood all Muslim action as reducible to 'Islamic extremist' ideology that sought nothing but domination. The invocation of historical examples to illustrate the contention that Muslims seek only the eradication of other cultures served to represent Muslims as irreducibly backward, the living enactors of a historical tradition that the West had turned away from. By representing Islam as unchanged over centuries, modern Muslims were presented as similarly intent on domination. Every appeal for cultural recognition or Islamic facilities was viewed through this prism as an attempt by Muslims to stake cultural power and wrest control of a territory that was not rightfully theirs.

For the EDL, as for the correspondents to *Dudley News*, local, national and international spaces were represented as culturally endangered because of Muslim presence. At the same time, these discourses betrayed a conviction that these spaces belonged to someone. They were all considered naturally and rightfully 'ours', and thus any effort by 'them' to alter these spaces endangered

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

the natural order. Discussing the reasons for a planned demonstration in Birmingham in October 2011, the EDL stated:

Birmingham's future matters to the locals – Muslim and non-Muslim – but it should matter to all of us. It does not matter where in the country radical Islam has managed to take root; its influence is still felt nationwide... There are those who blame 'Western' foreign policy for the growth of these various forms of radical Islam, and they are no doubt right that our involvement in the Middle East (present and past) has had some impact. But that is not to say that we are responsible for the emergence of Islamic terrorists or Islamists. The primary cause is right in front of us. It's simple. It's what Islamic terrorists and Islamists have in common. That's right, it begins with an I.⁴⁶⁷

As this extract illustrates, Islamophobic discourse relies on an understanding that the rightful managers of particular spaces are losing control, or have perhaps already lost it. When the EDL reminded their readers that they should care about the future of Birmingham, they meshed local, national and international space by explicitly positioning Muslims as the main challengers and contenders to these spaces. Since Islam, rather than politics ('Western' foreign policy), lay at the root of violence, the EDL contended that Islam had to be challenged locally, nationally and internationally. But the implication underlying this ideological position, and the central strand running through all Islamophobic articulations, is that these spaces must be defended because they belong to 'us'.

⁴⁶⁷ EDL, "Birmingham Demonstration: October 29th."

One final example of EDL discourse serves to illustrate how the group linked local, national and global levels through an Islamophobic understanding of Muslims as essentially one-dimensional and dangerous to all of these spaces. Referring to the attempt by Birmingham City Council to have the Home Secretary ban the planned EDL protest, *EDL News* stated:

We all celebrated when Muslims took to the streets in Egypt, declaring a Muslim Spring in the Middle-East. We celebrated the thought that at last Muslims would embrace democracy, freedom of speech and the right to assembly. But just as in Egypt where the Islamists have started to crack down on any hint of democratic process, persecute the Christian population, restrict freedom of speech, and limit the right to protest peacefully and the right to assemble, so too are the Muslims of Birmingham council trying to ignore the rights of Englishmen. Birmingham council, which appears to be run by Muslims and its dhimmi supporters in the Labour Party, have laid down a challenge to the rule of law, the rights of free Englishmen and the people of Great Britain. It's a challenge the EDL are happy to embrace. The EDL will pick up the torch of Freedom and Free speech.⁴⁶⁸

The EDL focused on the deterioration of democratic hopes in Egypt following the revolution, in order to imply that there was something inherently Islamic in the limiting of free speech and the right to protest. Birmingham council's attempts to have the EDL demonstration banned were then held up as an example of the same Islamic drive to silence criticism and undermine rights, presented as a challenge to the nation and the 'rights of free Englishmen'. Islam's global anti-

⁴⁶⁸ EDL, "Betrayed by Birmingham Dhimmi Council," *EDL News*, 2011, http://englishdefenceleague.org/birmingham_betrayed/ [Retrieved 1 March 2012].

democratic impulse was thus presented as prevailing within Birmingham council. Through this merging of local, national and international space, the EDL presented Birmingham as cracking down on democratic rights *in the same way* as Muslims in Egypt, and since elected representatives ('dhimmi supporters in the Labour party') could not be trusted to defend these rights, the task fell to the EDL.

Because the EDL believe that Islam is an ideological phenomenon, the group sees 'Islamic extremists' wherever it sees Muslims. It follows from this that Muslims are believed to be centrally driven by the desire for cultural domination in each and every space they inhabit. The EDL thus understands itself through this ideological lens as the group which can and must take back control, and restore dominance to the rightfully dominant. But though its focus and agenda is undoubtedly nationalistic, it relies on the blending of local, national and international levels as spaces which are all being culturally colonised by Muslims. What drives this discourse and the ideology behind it is the assertion that this is not the way it *should* be. For the EDL, as with other proponents of Islamophobic discourse, these spaces justly belong to non-Muslim cultural managers. The implicit understanding running through such discourse is that rightful cultural managers are 'Westernised', if not explicitly 'Western', and that being 'Westernised' means holding to a particularly Eurocentric cultural superiority. As the EDL, along with other signatories to the 'European Defence Leagues Memorandum of Understanding', stated: 'We must not be afraid to say what should be obvious to all: Our way is better. Not different, better.'⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁹ EDL, "European Defence Leagues: Memorandum of Understanding," *EDL News*, 2011, <http://englishdefenceleague.org/european-defence-leagues/> [Retrieved 28 February 2012].

Reconstituting privileged spaces: Inclusive Islamophobia

The exclusionary discourses outlined above operate as a means of regaining control over spaces believed to be threatened by the presence of Muslims. This space may be interpreted as physically threatened by Muslims who represent a violent extremist threat, or it may be culturally threatened by Muslims who are believed to be culturally colonising and changing it beyond recognition. However, as I have argued, it is not change itself that is feared. Rather, it is the formerly privileged and now endangered relationship with that space that drives Islamophobic discourse and practice. Islamophobia's imperative for action is based on the attempt to reconstitute this privileged relationship – it is a means of reaffirming the right to be a spatial manager and have a legitimate opinion on that territory's future.

Exclusionary discourses operate to inhibit Muslims in the public sphere, for example by preventing the construction of Dudley mosque, or through the EDL intimidation. By impeding Muslim action in this way, proponents of exclusionary Islamophobia reclaimed local, national and civilizational territories as their own, and psychologically reconstituted an imagined privileged relationship with these territories. Yet, if Islamophobia were made up only of exclusionary discourse and practice, it would not be so effective an ideology. Part of the reason Islamophobia is so perniciously ubiquitous is that it exists not only as bigotry and intolerance, but also takes an apparently rational and reasonable form that may be termed inclusive Islamophobia.

The good/bad Muslim dualism is centrally important to inclusive Islamophobia. Inclusive discourses insist that 'good' Muslims outnumber the 'bad', they demand that the 'moderates' stand up to their 'extremist' co-religionists and take leadership positions within British Islam, and they maintain that integration is achievable and desirable. Yet, while these discourses appear to be conciliatory and inclusive, they still operate to discipline and control based on the same understanding of privileged spaces. 'Good' Muslims, within inclusive discourses, are ideologically structured as objects to be moved around according to the will of the rightful managers of a territorial space, and they are allowed to be Islamic insofar as the particular Islam they practice is considered acceptable by these managers. Should they display an Islamic will which is outside the boundaries of acceptability, their status will change from 'good' to 'bad' and they will be subjected to exclusionary discourse and practice.

While exclusionary discourses of Islamophobia verge on the hysterical in their insistence that the situation is already out of control, inclusive discourses tend to be more measured. Muslim cultural diversity is viewed as excessive and dangerous to privileged spaces and relationships, but the situation is considered remediable through management strategies. The integration and tolerance discourses have important roles within inclusive Islamophobia. They are directed toward different subjects (the former is directed at Muslims, while the latter is entreated to non-Muslim cultural spatial managers), but they both function as discourses which condition behavioural expectations. What marks these discourses out as Islamophobic is not only their central concern with retaining and/or reinstating the relative power of non-Muslims over Muslims, but also the

centrality of those British/Western/universal values that Muslims are expected to integrate into.

The function of integration discourse in inclusive Islamophobia

Tony Blair's speech on multiculturalism and integration, in the context of the 2005 London bombings, provides a very good example of this form of inclusive Islamophobia, and is worth quoting at length in order to show how the argument works structurally. At the start of his speech Blair discussed the racial tolerance of Britain in glowing terms and went on to concede that the 7 July perpetrators had been integrated at the level of lifestyle, but stated: 'this is, in truth, not what I mean when I talk of integration. Integration, in this context, is not about culture or lifestyle. It is about values. It is about integrating at the point of shared, common unifying British values.'⁴⁷⁰ Blair went on to define these values as 'belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage'.⁴⁷¹ By defining the boundaries of Britishness through an explicit outlining of the values British people were expected to share, a line of cultural tolerance was drawn which could not be crossed. He went on to state: 'no distinctive culture or religion supersedes our duty to be part of an integrated United Kingdom.'⁴⁷² This qualifying sentence suggested that members of some cultures or religions had indeed put their distinctive identities above national belonging, and he went on to name this community:

⁴⁷⁰ Blair, "A Duty to Integrate. Speech on Multiculturalism and Integration. 8 December."

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

Others warned me against putting the issue in the context of 7/7, of terrorism, of our Muslim community. After all, extremism is not confined to Muslims, as we know from Northern Ireland and fringe elements in many ethnic groups. But actually what should give us optimism in dealing with this issue, is precisely that point... Most Muslims are proud to be British and Muslim and are thoroughly decent law-abiding citizens. But it is a problem with a minority of that community, particularly originating from certain countries. The reason I say that this is grounds for optimism, is that what the above proves, is that integrating people whilst preserving their distinctive cultures, is not impossible. It is the norm. The failure of one part of one community to do so is not a function of a flawed theory of a multicultural society. It is a function of a particular ideology that arises within one religion at this one time.⁴⁷³

Blair problematized Muslims by relating them to extremism, terrorism and lack of integration. But his inclusive discourse made clear that he was referring only to a minority of that community. British values had been contravened, and though not *all* Muslims were the problem, it was within the Muslim community that this problem arose and it was this community that therefore must be targeted by measures to integrate it properly.

The language used by Blair when speaking about Muslims is also worthy of comment. His reference to 'our Muslim community' was tinged with an implicit expression of ownership. This point was further emphasised when Blair stated that integrating people whilst preserving their distinctive cultures was the norm. His language betrays a conceptualisation of integration as a one way

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

process; 'we' integrate 'them,' and have had success in doing so, hence his assertion that multiculturalism was not a flawed theory. It is not 'our' way of doing things that are wrong, but problematic Muslims who have failed to grasp what being British means.

This paternalistic understanding of the relationship between British Muslims and non-Muslims and the domestic, familial imagery of the nation that this implies, is further underlined through the language of disappointment. Blair suggested that Muslims had failed to appreciate what being British means, misunderstood multiculturalism and neglected their duty to integrate:

The whole point is that multicultural Britain was never supposed to be a celebration of division; but of diversity. The purpose was to allow people to live harmoniously together, despite their difference; not to make their difference an encouragement to discord.⁴⁷⁴

Blair's discourse of benevolent paternalism was nevertheless essentially optimistic. Since Muslims had misunderstood their duties as Britons, they could be educated. By making clear the boundaries of acceptability and the primacy of incontrovertible, non-negotiable British values, Muslims could be drawn back in to the nation: 'Being British carries rights. It also carries duties. And those duties take clear precedence over any cultural or religious practice.'⁴⁷⁵ His implication was that Muslims had failed to live up to their duties, partly because it had not been made clear what was expected of them. Blair presented British conviviality and desire to welcome and nurture cultural

⁴⁷⁴ He goes on to state: 'The right to be in a multicultural society was always, always implicitly balanced by a duty to integrate, to be part of Britain, to be British and Asian, British and black, British and white' Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

distinctiveness as having been abused by closed communities who had used public money to entrench segregation. Integration required such hospitable attitudes to be rethought:

In a sense, very good intentions got the better of us. We wanted to be hospitable to new groups. We wanted, rightly, to extend a welcome and did so by offering public money to entrench their cultural presence. Money was too often freely awarded to groups that were tightly bonded around religious, racial or ethnic identities.⁴⁷⁶

Although Blair was making a very contentious point in his linking of the London bombings to issues of integration and multiculturalism, he was able to do so by problematizing Muslims at several levels (linked to extremism and terrorism, refusing to integrate, misunderstanding multiculturalism) and representing 'values' as the solution to the numerous problems associated with them. His assertion that most Muslims were not at fault was undermined by his constant referral to this community as the target of state intervention. The ideological structure of inclusive Islamophobia thus mirrors its exclusionary twin. Through a process of objectification, Muslims were not addressed as equal citizens with whom one can have a discussion about values. Rather, they were represented as a community to be *targeted* with these values, deployed as weapons of control.

Although the discourse of integration implies something positive, it is saturated with a conception of Muslims as objects to be directed and controlled. The call to integrate contains within it an understanding that

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

something exists into which individuals *can* integrate, something larger that will contain them and within which they can be included. The integration debates always contain an implicit understanding of what the nation is and what it is not.⁴⁷⁷

The demand for integration is a mode of power within Islamophobic discourse that aims to discursively construct Muslims as national objects. The implicit understanding that 'our' values are what Muslims need to integrate into reinforces this power relationship, and integration becomes a disciplinary process which restores contested relationships of power by positioning non-Muslims as national spatial managers with the right to decide, supervise and direct the level of acceptable integration. Such a discourse rearticulates and reproduces the differentiation between the national subject, who exercises will, and the national object, who submits to it.⁴⁷⁸ The uncontested centrality of the non-Muslim subject as someone whose opinion is legitimate and who is entitled to feel concerned about the level of integration is reaffirmed each time these debates resurface.

The function of tolerance discourse in inclusive Islamophobia

⁴⁷⁷ Kalra and Kapoor have noted that white middle class values are those established as that which is being segregated from and needs to be integrated into Kalra and Kapoor, "Interrogating Segregation, Integration and the Community Cohesion Agenda," 1404. Like much in the integration debates, these values are never explicitly named as such, but the concentration on 'extremists' from Muslim and white working class communities as those who threaten integration, spread hatred and encourage segregation implicitly nods to embedded unarticulated normative values. Blair stated 'Those whites who support the BNP's policy of separate races and those Muslims who shun integration into British society both contradict the fundamental values that define Britain today: tolerance, solidarity across the racial and religious divide, equality for all and between all.' Blair, "A Duty to Integrate. Speech on Multiculturalism and Integration. 8 December."

⁴⁷⁸ Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 94.

Integration functions discursively in tandem with tolerance. Both assert rights and duties, yet they address different subjects. While integration is pitched towards Muslims, and confers the right to be British on the condition that Muslims integrate into British values, tolerance affirms the acceptance of difference as a duty which goes hand in hand with the right to be British. The latter is an address to non-Muslims to relinquish their power to be intolerant, and the former conditions this by stipulating its boundaries. When taken together the dual power of these discourses lies not only in the central uncontested power of non-Muslims to set thresholds of tolerance and levels of expected integration, but also the implication that if integration is not achieved, then intolerance is natural. In other words, if Muslims fail to integrate as directed, then the intolerance of non-Muslims is legitimate, justifiable and predictable.

Former Home and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's intervention into the 'veil debate' is a good example of how integration and tolerance operate within Islamophobia as an expression of hegemonic power. Writing in his weekly column in the Lancashire Evening Telegraph, Straw discussed an encounter with one of his Muslim constituents:

It was not the first time I had conducted an interview with someone in a full veil, but this particular encounter, though very polite and respectful on both sides, got me thinking. In part, this was because of the apparent incongruity between the signals which indicate common bonds — the

entirely English accent, the couple's education (wholly in the UK) — and the fact of the veil.⁴⁷⁹

Straw set out a dichotomy between the veil and Englishness based on his perception that the former signalled separation from common national bonds. The woman's accent indicated that English was her first language and her education, he stressed, was entirely in the UK. These facts indicate to the reader that the couple are British born and bred, yet the veil weakened the common bonds Straw felt with this couple. He went on to explain the effect that this incident had upon him:

*Above all, it was because I felt uncomfortable about talking to someone "face-to-face" who I could not see. So I decided that I wouldn't just sit there the next time a lady turned up to see me in a full veil, and I haven't... I can't recall a single occasion when a lady has refused to lift the veil; most seem relieved.*⁴⁸⁰ [Emphasis added].

Straw's discomfort led him to decide that in future he would be proactive in assuaging his unease by requesting that veiled women show their faces. His recounting of this incident can be understood within the rubric of inclusive Islamophobia because of the interplay between tolerance and integration. Straw asserted that on most levels this woman was integrated. She spoke English with an English accent and had a British education, yet the fact of the veil represented to him a weakening of these bonds of commonality and above all, it made him uncomfortable. His decision to no longer 'just sit there' with a

⁴⁷⁹ Jack Straw, "I Want to Unveil My Views on an Important Issue", *Telegraph*, 6 October, 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1530718/I-want-to-unveil-my-views-on-an-important-issue.html> [Retrieved 4 August 2013].

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

veiled woman indicates that the incident led him to abandon his diffidence and assert his desire to conduct interviews with constituents in a way that would not make him feel uncomfortable.

There are two things to note about this incident and Straw's interpretation of it. First, in framing the veil as a signal of separation⁴⁸¹ he marked it as a difference that exceeded his level of tolerance, and resolved to no longer accept this state of affairs by henceforth requesting that veils be removed. Second, he formulated this decision, and acted out its consequences, from a position of power. This is not just the power delegated to him by society as an elected representative, but a position of cultural power from which his entitlement to feel 'comfortable' was judged as normatively more important than Muslim women's right to veil. His acknowledgement of this power is revealed in his statement that most women 'seem relieved' when he asked them to remove their veil, suggesting to his audience that by conferring permission to unveil he was in some sense liberating these women, portrayed as eagerly awaiting powerful men to authorise their undressing.

Muslims are expected to integrate and non-Muslims are expected to tolerate. Yet both of these discourses, apparently inclusive as they are, maintain the cultural power of non-Muslims. Non-Muslims are free to set both

⁴⁸¹ Later in the article Straw reflected on what the veil symbolised to him, stating that he promised the woman he 'would reflect on what she said to me. Would she, however, think hard about what I said — in particular my concern that wearing the full veil was bound to make better relations between the two communities more difficult. It was such a visible statement of separation and of difference.' This exchange is far from equal. Not only did Straw set the meaning of the veil (as separation and difference), but there is also a paternalistic adult/child relationship in his framing of this conversation. He promised to 'reflect' on her position while she was implored to 'think hard' about his. The impression given is that he has formulated his position after much soul searching and has arrived at the correct conclusion, and if she endeavoured to undertake the same degree of contemplation she would understand and agree with him. His opinion is presented as implicitly more correct than hers, and if she would only think (properly) about it, she would concur. Ibid.

the boundaries of tolerance and the expected levels of integration, Muslims have only the power to endure or resist. Straw's testimony of his request in action further underlines this:

Last Friday was a case in point. The veil came off almost as soon as I opened my mouth. I dealt with the problems the lady brought to me. We then had an interesting debate about veil wearing. This contained some surprises. It became clear that the husband played no part in her decision. She had read books about the issue. *She felt more comfortable wearing the veil when out. People bothered her less.*⁴⁸² [Emphasis added].

This extract is notable not only for Straw's 'surprise' that the decision to veil may be autonomous and educated, but also that the central signifier upon which his own decision to request unveiling turned is itself an object of struggle. Both Straw and the veiled woman are seeking to go about their daily lives in a way that makes them feel 'comfortable', and both, in exercising this right are causing discomfort to others. Placed in a wider context of good community relations, if the veil is constructed as a mark of separation and difference, then its removal becomes a nod towards integration and similarity, but the symbolism of the veil – its meaning in society – is decided *a priori*. Muslim women can thus grant or refuse Straw's request to unveil but they are denied any power to challenge his reading of the meaning of the cloth itself.

Veiled women were presented as contravening a particular value, in this case Jack Straw's right to feel 'comfortable', which was placed in a wider context of good community relations in order to generalise and naturalise it as

⁴⁸² Ibid.

something normatively desirable. In requesting the removal of veils, Straw prioritised his own comfort, restored his cultural will to dominance and put Muslims back in their place as objects to be directed.

The purpose of this discussion is not to mark individuals out and censure them as Islamophobic. Rather, what I have tried to show is that Islamophobia is an ideological entity that may take exclusionary and inclusive forms, but is basically dependent on an understanding that Muslim difference is excessive and dangerous and that the cultural power of non-Muslims must remain dominant in the face of increasing Islamic demands.

The integration and tolerance discourses within inclusive Islamophobia function to situate culturally defined individuals in positions of power and subordination. This discourse is usually conducted at the national level and appeals to national belonging and the rights and duties of British citizens. Yet its power goes beyond nationalism. The integration and tolerance discourses are heavily reliant on the internalisation of a subject/object construction, which determines who is a subject, with the right to set expected levels of integration and boundaries of tolerance, and who is an object, duty bound to fulfil the roles decided in advance by national subjects. Once objectified as articles of national will, to be directed and managed according to the whims of culturally dominant and value-superior non-Muslims, Muslim difference must be contained through Islamophobic discourse which reaffirms the right of national subjects to tolerate them only insofar as they have integrated.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have argued that it is most useful to understand Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism. Analysing Islamophobic discourse as such brings to the fore the essentialisation of Muslim culture as something that structures the attitudes and behaviours of Muslims, is 'biologised' in some way as innate and inescapable, and is antithetical to British cultural norms. It is this understanding of Muslim culture as 'other' that drives Islamophobic expression and structures Islamophobic discourse.

Yet, the belief that Muslims are different, and even the conviction that they are culturally inferior, does not necessarily provide an imperative for acting upon these beliefs through Islamophobic discourse and practices of exclusion.

Individuals may hold such beliefs without feeling any need to express them. An analysis of contemporary British Islamophobia is thus incomplete without an attempt to understand why this ideology has such salience at the present historical moment, and why Islamophobic discourse and practices occur at such varied sites and are employed by such diverse actors. What is the attraction of Islamophobic discourse? What benefits does it provide to its adherents? And what does it achieve ideologically for those employing it?

The present chapter has aimed to answer these questions by conceptualising Islamophobia as a discourse of spatial dominance, where non-Muslims are considered to have managerial rights over a particular territory, a more legitimate claim on its values and an entitlement to decide what that territory should be like, who belongs there and who should be removed. The diversely situated expressions of Islamophobia analysed throughout this thesis share in common the perception that a particular space has been, or is being, culturally comprised by Muslims and a desire to reclaim that space as belonging to the dominant

cultural group, whether local (Dudleians), national (English/British, French, Dutch, etc.) or civilizational (Western/European). In every articulation of Islamophobia, whether explicitly exclusionary or apparently inclusive, the illusion of the power of the dominant group to decide the cultural component of the spaces believed to be endangered is implicit, even if only expressed as the right to have a legitimate opinion. Islamophobia provides those who subscribe to its ideological tenets with a sense of control over the destiny of those spaces they consider their own.

As a discourse of control, Islamophobia employs a three stage process: first, Muslims are presented as contravening a deeply held value with their specifically Islamic demands. Second, these values are appealed to as inviolable essences that must be upheld at all costs. Third, Muslim demands are thwarted, and Muslims are controlled and put back in their place through the deployment of Islamophobic discourse and practice, which restores the dominance of non-Muslims and their place as legitimate deciders of, and actors upon, the national or local will.

This ideological process is cyclical and performative in its reaffirming and entrenching of actors' identities and positions as antagonistic. It is also a constructed process, in the sense that a value only becomes an incontrovertible essence once it is threatened by Muslims. This is an example of what Slavoj Žižek understands as transference.⁴⁸³ As Muslims are perceived to threaten privileged relationships, a particular value is seized upon and retrospectively constructed as the essence of the particular territory seen to be under threat; an essence that

⁴⁸³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 102.

has always been and is now imperilled by Muslim cultural demands, and which must be upheld at all costs in order that privileged relationships be reconstituted.

In each of the cases discussed in this thesis, because the values at stake were presented first as threatened by Muslims, and second as incontrovertible, Muslims were represented as endangering the very essence of the space held dear. In order that the space remain authentic, Muslims had to be put back in their place as an unobtrusive and inconspicuous minority who did not make specific demands that could potentially change the territory. Islamophobia, as a discourse of control, exists ideologically to restore to dominance the will of non-Muslims, and action, in the form of Islamophobic discourse and practice, occurs when the privileged position of non-Muslims is challenged by Muslim presence and will. It is not the fact that Muslims exist as Muslims, being different in a particular space, which is the issue. Rather, it is that they are perceived to be seeking to change this space, exercising their own Muslim will and refusing to recognise the supremacy of non-Muslims.

Within this ideological universe, Muslims occupy the position of the undesirable. As a discourse of control, Islamophobia provides its adherents with a means of reconstituting threatened identities and privileged relationships to spaces through an objectification of Muslims as the problematic significant other which prevents an idealised space being what it ought to be. The presence of Muslims is understood through this prism as deeply threatening to settled identities because of their perceived unwillingness to accept the cultural dominance of the legitimate spatial managers. Islamophobia provides a discursive means of reconstituting these fractured privileged relationships and reinstating fantasised authority. While exclusionary discourses assume that control has

already been lost, inclusive discourses work on the assumption that control may still yet be retained.

The three stage process of ideological Islamophobia applies equally, although perhaps not so obviously, to discourses of inclusion. When Muslims were asked to set an example by integrating into the nation, requested to remove their veils, told to declare themselves against extremism and terrorism, and exhorted not to complain about discriminatory counterterrorism practices such as stop and search, house raids and increased airport security, they were being told to put the nation above their cultural and religious difference, at the same time as the nation itself was focusing unrelentingly upon this difference. The three stage process operated in the same way. First, Muslims were problematized as radically different, second, national values were presented as incontrovertible, and third, Muslims were controlled through Islamophobic discourse. In the case of inclusive discourse, this control took the form of demands for more integration. Muslims were problematized as radically different from other Britons and within this understanding was an imperative for action. Inclusive Islamophobia aimed to integrate by only offering recognition to those Muslims who acknowledged national values as their primary identification. In doing so, it privileged non-Muslim nationals as the bearers of the right to decide who should be integrated and according to which values they should be accepted as British. The dominance of non-Muslims as legitimate deciders of, and actors upon, the national will remained in place. Even as Muslims were apparently invited into the nation, they were invited conditionally – the nation welcomed them only in so far as they accepted their place within it and did not attempt to change it.

Such a discourse need not be exclusively applied to Muslims. Other minorities have historically been, and are contemporarily, excluded (and 'included') through the same process. However, Islamophobia gains its specificity through the rather obvious fact of being directed at Muslims. There is no reason to believe that similar structural discourses could not and would not be directed at other racially or culturally defined minorities at other historical periods. By the same token, Islamophobia may lose its grip on the current British situation. At the present time, however, Islamophobia – the cultural problematisation of Muslims as Britain's significant 'others' and the drive to manage them through disciplinary discourses of control – is a principal discourse at a number of social and political sites.

It is clear from the examples discussed that Islamophobia, instrumentalised to safeguard privileged spatial relationships, does not end at the particular spaces that proponents seek to protect. Even when Islamophobic discourse is employed at a local level for very specific aims, such as in the Dudley mosque debate, proponents draw upon larger civilizational discourses in order to rationalise and prop up their claims. Every assertion of the values of a local territory, and every investigation as to whether these values had been contravened, contained within it an understanding of who was a subject with agency and the right to direct change and who was an object to be moved around according to the former's will. This subject/object construction is a central feature of Eurocentric ideology.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁴ Anibal Quijano and Michael Ennis, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *Nepantla: Views From the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 540–542; Edgardo Lander, "Eurocentrism and Colonialism in Latin American Social Thought," *Nepantla: Views From the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 527; Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 174.

Eurocentrism is usually understood as a special case of ethnocentrism, the tendency of human beings to view their own social group as the basis of evaluative judgments concerning the practices of others, with the attendant implication that their values and practices are superior.⁴⁸⁵ What makes Eurocentrism worthy of its special status is the historical trajectory of this particular ethnocentrism. Carried by the conquistadors to the New World in the 15th and 16th centuries, spread globally by imperialist and colonialist practices of the European powers in the 18th and 19th centuries, and accompanied by Enlightenment rationality and the scientific method, the sense of Western superiority that constituted the societies of Europe (and synonymously the West) was imbued with a claim to universality.⁴⁸⁶ Eurocentrism, as it historically developed, contained within it not simply an assertion that West is best, but also a claim that the rational philosophy at its core transcended cultural baggage and was thus available to all societies, who could (and should) imitate the West in order to join the march to progress that was humanity's historical mission.⁴⁸⁷

Eurocentrism developed along with conquest and colonial exploitation as the ideology that justified and sustained them intellectually. Eurocentric thought held, (and holds) that Europeans had a natural advantage of culture or nature, and in each moment of history some natural essence of superiority that was bred into the very being of Europeans/Westerners was working itself out.⁴⁸⁸ From this

⁴⁸⁵ John Brohman, "Universalism, Eurocentrism, and Ideological Bias in Development Studies: From Modernisation to Neoliberalism," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1995): 127.

⁴⁸⁶ Enrique D. Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)," *Boundary 2* 20, no. 3 (2011): 74; J. Hobson, "East and West in Global History," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2–3 (May 2006): 408–409; Helmut Heit, "Western Identity, Barbarians and the Inheritance of Greek Universalism," *The European Legacy* 10, no. 7 (2005): 727–728..

⁴⁸⁷ Martin-Munoz, "Unconscious Islamophobia," 24.

⁴⁸⁸ Ash Amin, "Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (2004): 2; Grosfoguel and Mielants, "The Long-Durée Entanglement Between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern / Colonial Capitalist / Patriarchal World-System: An Introduction," 8.

perspective, the conquest of the 'New World' was the natural working out of an essentially adventuresome nature, the French and American revolutions represented the natural yearning for freedom within European DNA, the industrial and scientific revolutions were explained as the result of essential European rationality, and the period of high imperialism and colonialism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was considered the historical working out of natural European civilizational superiority. Eurocentric ideology explained the West's position at the centre of the world system and world market as the natural result of centuries of supremacy at every level, created through European innovation and superiority.⁴⁸⁹

It is useful to consider Islamophobia under Eurocentrism as analogous to racism in a system of white supremacy.⁴⁹⁰ Under white supremacy, non-white races are subordinated and inferiorised, while those considered white receive social, material and psychological benefits. Eurocentrism similarly operates as a racialized social system with a civilizational thrust, in which (usually white) European 'Westerners' are considered superior in culture to non-Europeans. The exclusionary and inclusive forms of Islamophobia serve to maintain this system of Eurocentric dominance; a hegemonic form of control, that interpellates subjects as Western or non-Western and provides economic, social, political and psychological benefits to the former, while seeking to manage, contain and

⁴⁸⁹ Edgardo Lander has argued that Eurocentric ideology considers differences in cultural patterns between the hegemonic powers and the rest of the world to be expressions of the intrinsic inferiority of all others, to be supplanted through the European-led civilizing process. Lander, "Eurocentrism and Colonialism in Latin American Social Thought," 528.

⁴⁹⁰ White supremacy is understood here in the sense used by critical race theorists, as a system of privilege in which ordinary white people receive a variety of benefits by virtue of belonging to the racial majority, and seek to defend their racial privilege through racist practices. Eduardo Bonilla-silva, "'This Is a White Country': The Racial Ideology of the Western Nations of the World-System," *Sociological Inquiry* 70, no. 2 (2000): 191; Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 18; J. D. Foster, "Defending Whiteness Indirectly: A Synthetic Approach to Race Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 20, no. 6 (2009): 685–703.

assimilate the latter. Those considered to be Western receive benefits by virtue of being the bearers of a progressive, liberal and egalitarian civilization. Western values are considered the norm, and the standard by which other cultural subjects are judged, and Westerners have the honour of being considered subjects, capable of having an effect by directing and changing, or retaining and restricting the values of a territory. Muslims within this system are positioned as the bearers of a particularistic culture constructed as the West's antagonistic other. While Eurocentric, Western subjects accumulate all positive signifiers, Muslims are perceived as culturally deficient and required to assimilate into Eurocentric culture, imbibing its norms and values and shedding their cultural difference.

As part of a wide and deep global racial structure which provides benefits to those racialized as white, Western and European, the particular cultural racism that is Islamophobia benefits those whose values are understood as Western. This is why the concept of Eurocentrism is so important. In Britain the allocation of material and psychological benefits still depends to a large extent on white skin, but not only white skin – in a multiracial society, contemporary national belonging has a value dimension. Those whose values are considered to be in line with the dominant Eurocentric values of society receive greater benefits than those whose values are considered antithetical, opposed or inferior. Islamophobia is a (cultural) racism of values, a racism that posits the values of Eurocentric culture as superior and claims Muslim culture to be inferior, dangerous, and threatening to the maintenance of Eurocentric privilege.

If there were no benefit to employing Islamophobia, proponents would not do so. What Islamophobia offers to those who utilise its narratives and mental

models is the prize of subjectivity, the positive attributes drawn into the West as an imagined civilizational territory and the consequent positive identity that is associated with it. Westerners within Eurocentrism are subjects, all others are objects. Understanding the great investment of identity that Eurocentrism represents helps explain its appeal. Eurocentrism tells a story of adventure, the conquering of the globe, the riches of the 'New World', the subjugation of the rest, and the political and technological revolutions of the early modern period. It is a history of glory and success populated by brave conquistadors and great innovators. It is an intellectual history of discovery and science, great ideas and noble principles. And it is the story of freedom; revolution from the tyranny of priests and kings and the centring of man as the creator of his destiny. By accumulating Western civilizational capital, individuals are able to claim a share of this history, and one of the most effective ways to do this is to draw a line between oneself and the cultural other whose values are believed to be absolutely antithetical.

Conceptualising Islamophobia as a shared social narrative of the West, rather than an expression of prejudicial affectation, suggests that attempts to eradicate anti-Muslim sentiment through myth-busting and contact theory are approaching the problem from the wrong angle. Similarly, integration debates are unlikely to yield positive results as long as they are structured within a Eurocentric understanding of values to be integrated into. If we understand Islamophobia as an expression of resurgent Eurocentrism then rising to its challenge implies a radically more inclusive agenda. Not only does it require that integration be reformulated away from assimilative policies that prioritise the values of one group over another, but it also demands that space be made for an open debate

about the relevance and normative commitments of the values to which society subscribes.

Chapter Eight - Conclusions

This thesis has had two major goals: one analytical and one theoretical. My analytical goal was to examine the nature of post-2001 Islamophobic discourse in the UK. My theoretical goal was to understand the purpose of Islamophobic discourse, the advantages that it holds for those employing it and the reason this discourse is so widespread.

Employing critical race theory as a theoretical and analytical framework, I have developed an interpretation of Islamophobia that reformulates the racialized system of white supremacy as one of Eurocentric supremacy, where Western subjects are awarded a better social, economic and political 'racial contract' and seek to defend these privileges against real and imagined Muslim demands.⁴⁹¹ Under a system of Eurocentric supremacy, Islamophobia is not an 'unfounded hostility', as the Runnymede report describes it,⁴⁹² but exists rather as a rational defense of collective Eurocentric advantages.⁴⁹³

Chapter one discussed the theoretical framework that guided the research, and argued that, as a cultural racism, Islamophobia can be conceptualised within

⁴⁹¹ Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, 193. Bonilla-Silva discusses this in relation to white supremacy as a result of the colonialist and imperialist expansions of the 15th and 16th centuries that led to the development of a racialised social system that provided whites with greater benefits. I agree with this understanding of white supremacy, however I think it is better formulated as Eurocentric supremacy in the present historical moment. Although the structures and privileges remain the same, this reformulation focuses on the universalising aspects of Western culture and the conditional invitation extended to non-western subjects to join the march to progress that is humanity's historical mission and which is only possible through western cultural forms.

⁴⁹² Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All," 4.

⁴⁹³ Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, 193.

a critical race theory framework as the racist discourse and practice that upholds a system of Eurocentric supremacy. In order to further explore the implications of this conceptualisation, chapter two reviewed the scholarly literature on Islamophobia and argued that previous conceptualisations are useful in their explanations of the historical antecedents and structural form of the phenomenon, but tell us little about its purpose.

Eurocentric Islamophobia has developed a number of narratives that enable those employing it to argue rationally that they are not against all Muslims, only extremists. In chapter three, I aimed to delineate the dominant state-sponsored discourses that focused on Muslims in the post-2001 period. Community cohesion and counterterrorism were identified as the central organising discourses which aimed to represent Muslim identity and control and contain their cultural diversity. Analysis of these discourses highlighted the centrality of the good/bad Muslim binary and the related understanding that (bad) Muslims represented a threat to Britain's internal cohesion and external security. I argued in this chapter that this binary can be understood as a representation that constructs Muslims as Britain's 'significant others', both internally and externally threatening and thus requiring careful management and surveillance.

From the critical perspective, which argues that all discourse has concrete social effects, it follows that Islamophobic discourse will be used by individuals to argue against change that is perceived to advantage Muslims and disadvantage non-Muslims. Chapter four considered how the dominant discourses outlined in chapter three were rearticulated and reformulated for particular local purposes during the Dudley mosque debate. By isolating representations of Muslims articulated by ordinary local people for the purpose of preventing the mosque's

construction, a deeper understanding of Islamophobic discourse can be obtained. This chapter demonstrated that discourses which presented Muslims as dangerous, threatening and antithetical were readily applied to a local context for the purpose of preventing change in the area.

The theoretical position outlined rests on the understanding of Islamophobia as cultural racism, yet this is a controversial conceptualisation. Chapter five dealt directly with this controversy, analysing the discourse of an overtly Islamophobic group, the English Defence League, and attending to their central conviction that they are 'not racist.' This chapter detailed how Islamophobia operates as culturally racist discourse by essentialising Muslim culture as determining and employing a number of strategies typical of racist discourse construction in order to present speakers as within the boundaries of liberal tolerance. This chapter also demonstrated how the EDL laid claim to the nation by presenting itself as the defender of its values by positioning Muslims as consistently and inveterately antagonistic.

If Islamophobia is an expression of Eurocentrism then its appeal will not be limited to Britain. Rather, we would expect to see any nation that has a claim to European/Western values invoking them in order to discipline and control Muslims. This was the focus of chapter six, which considered the way Islamophobic narratives had been used to mark national boundaries in Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands and France. By considering key construction moments, this chapter attempted to understand how Muslims were represented as national 'others' through a problematisation of their culture as antithetical to dearly held national values. This chapter argued that the national values appealed to were always positioned as cherished and timeless European

values whose national expression was challenged and prevented full realisation by the presence of Muslims.

The four empirical chapters revealed a remarkable convergence in discourse structure, narratives used to represent Muslims and larger discourses appealed to. Yet this convergence does not provide sufficient answer to the question of why individuals and groups employ these narratives. Chapter seven, attempted to explain this phenomenon by extending Ghassan Hage's theoretical formulation of racism as nationalist practices to Islamophobic discourse. Whether employed for specific local purposes, as in the Dudley mosque debates, or for national purposes as chapters five and six demonstrated, Islamophobia relies on the notion that space has been culturally compromised by Muslims and must be restored to authenticity by legitimate non-Muslim cultural managers. As such it represents a discourse of control whose purpose is to put Muslims back in their place as an invisible and silent minority who do not make faith-based demands of the society in which they live. As a discourse of control, Islamophobia relies on Eurocentrism to give it rationality and legitimacy. Eurocentric binaries play a central role in this, the most important of which is the subject/object binary around which all other attributes of non-Muslims and Muslims are scattered in the Eurocentric imaginary.

Contributions to knowledge

This thesis offers two central contributions to the scholarly debate on Islamophobia. First, the empirical chapters contribute to the literature on the nature of Islamophobia by analysing the form and structure of discourse that

seeks to represent Muslims and Islam. These analyses have drawn attention to the culturally racist frames, styles and ideological understandings that Islamophobia recycles and relies upon, and produces new knowledge about the way in which individuals and groups portray and construct Muslim identity and the purposes for which Islamophobic discourse is used.

Second, the thesis has contributed to knowledge by addressing a significant gap identified in the scholarly literature; the purpose that Islamophobic discourse serves for those employing it. To this end I have conceptualised Islamophobia as a culturally racist discourse of Eurocentric supremacism, which operates to restore fantasised dominance to the supposedly legitimate cultural managers of particular spaces. Understanding Islamophobia in this way allows a greater understanding of why it has such prevalence at the present time. From the perspective of those employing the discourse, Muslims are culturally changing a space they consider their own in an unacceptable way.

Three central research questions have guided this study, regarding the nature, the character and the purpose of Islamophobic discourse. In order to conclude and explicate the contributions of this research I now turn to each of these questions and offer answers.

What is the nature of Islamophobic discourse?

Much of the discussion about Islamophobia in previous literature has been concerned with how to conceptualise the phenomenon. The present study has contributed to this debate by analysing empirical examples of discourse that represents Muslims and Islam for their structure and form. From the focus within

community cohesion and counterterrorism on the good/bad dichotomy, to the discourses of threat and blame which made up the discourse of opposition to Dudley mosque, the strategies of cultural racist discourse construction employed by the EDL, and the binary of western/Muslim values employed in Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands and France, Islamophobia relies upon binary oppositions that allow its proponents to lay claim to a host of positive values, while denigrating, disciplining and excluding Muslims.

Across these diverse sites, representations invoked an essentialised and determinative 'Muslim culture' as threatening. It is this essentialisation of culture that can be understood as the central organising principle of Islamophobia; the belief that Muslims are intrinsically different.

What is the character of Islamophobic and how does it work to mark boundaries of identity?

Understanding Islamophobia as a culturally racist discourse foregrounds the way Muslims are constructed as other through particular discursive strategies. As discussed in detail in chapter five, racist discourse employs a number of strategies to mark its 'others' out as, while at the same time allowing those articulating the discourse to make claims to rationality and reasonableness. In Islamophobic discourse these take the form of denial of Islamophobic prejudice, projection of culturally racist motivation on to Muslims, positive self and negative-other representations, and diminutives such as 'I'm not against all Muslims, but...' In exclusionary discourses, such as those witnessed during the Dudley mosque debate and in EDL news articles, these are often explicit and obvious. Yet

inclusive discourses, such as community cohesion and integration, which constructed a good/bad Muslim binary and conditionally embraced the former while targeting and disciplining the latter, operated the very same discursive strategies.

Any discourse that essentialises culture as determinative in such a way must be considered culturally racist. The discourses of threat and blame that centrally inform Islamophobia further support this conceptualisation, but it is the essential function of binaries within the discourse that help to explain how boundaries of identity are marked through Islamophobic articulation. Islamophobia turns on the central construction of us and them. Every other construction is scattered around these two identities, and each has a number of attributes attached to them that are so embedded in the discourse that to invoke one always invokes its oppositional pair. The good/bad Muslim binary that is repeatedly invoked always represents a positive identity (good Muslims who are like us and can be integrated) and (bad) Muslims with excessive and problematic cultural diversity who are present as antagonistic to this and must be contained.

What is the purpose of Islamophobic discourse and why do diversely situated speakers appeal to it?

The belief that Muslims are intrinsically 'other' is not an imperative for action, and understanding that Muslims are represented as good or bad in order to draw them in or exclude them from particular sites does not explain the purpose of Islamophobic discourse. Why do diverse speakers across differing social sites

appeal to the same narratives each and every time in order to mark Muslims out as different?

Even when instrumentalised for a very particular purpose, Islamophobia draws upon wider narratives that serve to link local struggles with a broad civilisational understanding of their importance. Articulated in diverse sites, Islamophobia nonetheless relies upon a restricted number of tropes that serve to represent Muslims as deeply threatening to the values and identities of the spaces they occupy. Throughout this thesis I have tried to show that Islamophobia, whether employed for specifically exclusionary ends or to ostensibly promote inclusion and integration, shares the same structure. I argued that this structure is ultimately a discourse of control which fantasises the authority of non-Muslims over Muslims, and showed how this discourse works in local and national locations in Britain and other European countries to shore up boundaries and restore control to those who feel that Muslims are changing the spaces to which they relate.

The signifiers of Islamophobic discourse are reliant on a Eurocentric understanding of values, so that those who identify with Islamophobia can draw in and on positive attributes, while dispelling negative attributes to Muslims. As a symbolic field of accumulation,⁴⁹⁴ Eurocentrism operates in such a way that individuals and groups can accumulate civilizational capital by laying claim to particular attributes believed to belong to the West, regardless of their skin colour, ethnic background, culture or religion, as long as they are not Muslim. This is because Muslims are understood within the ideological confines of Eurocentrism to be culturally antithetical to Western norms. Those who are unproblematically 'Western' have less discursive work to do than those whose

⁴⁹⁴ Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, 232.

heritage, ethnicity or skin colour mark them out as having originated from the non-West. For this latter group, Islamophobia provides a useful way of accumulating civilisational capital to stake their claim to Western Eurocentric space, and the right to decide who does and does not belong.

It is this fantasised right to decide that makes up the imperative of Islamophobia. Muslims are problematized within this discourse for the purpose of marking spatial boundaries and giving Eurocentric subjects dominion over them. By relegating Muslims to the position of local, national and civilisational object, Islamophobia promotes non-Muslim, Eurocentric subjects to the position of cultural managers. Through a three stage ideological process, Islamophobia restores fantasised power to those who perceive Muslim cultural difference to be unacceptably changing a territory. By representing Muslims as making unacceptable demands of a particular territory, singling out a particular timeless value that is under threat and reifying this value to an absolute, Muslims are put back in their place through the discourse of Islamophobia, while those participating experience a restoration of their cultural power to decide the values of a space.

Potential criticisms

The theory advanced in this thesis describes a world in which some people receive 'natural' benefits by virtue of belonging unproblematically to Eurocentric culture. Accepting with this theory means recognising that in a culturally racialized social system all non-Muslims receive unearned benefits. Some receive these benefits naturally, by belonging unproblematically to Eurocentric culture,

being 'natural' citizens of Britain, and particularly being white. Others, whose skin colour and heritage marks them out as of immigrant descent have to articulate their belonging and mark themselves out explicitly as not Muslim by exercising cultural capital that often involves overtly Islamophobic discourse. As critical race scholars have argued, in a system of white supremacy whites develop defensive beliefs that attempt to explain their privileges as earned and legitimate. In a system of Eurocentric supremacy, natural Eurocentric subjects do the same, explaining their privileges as the result of socialisation in the culture of a 'free' society that values individualism, hard work and free expression.

Critics of this position may rebuke these claims by claiming I am making a fictitious distinction between Muslims and 'Westerners' real by reifying these categories. Some may even suggest that Muslims are themselves in the grip of Islamic supremacism or that Muslims' cultural practice is what holds them back from full participation in society, leading to self-segregation and ultimately violent extremism, which in turn colours the dominant group's view of them as unalterably 'other'.

Many of these are the same arguments made against any analysis that considers power relations to be systemic, and although ideological positions are rarely destabilised by rational arguments, I will answer each of the criticisms outlined.

First, on the reification of categories, there is a very sensible objection to be made to the use of terms such as 'Muslim', 'non-Muslim' and 'Westerner', and some may rightly point out that these terms not only have different meanings to different observers, but also are constructed categories in themselves. I agree

that all social categories are constructed, and that the identity 'Muslim' will often mean very different things to those who consider themselves Muslim and those who mark others out as Muslim. I also agree with the point that 'non-Muslims' will rarely think of themselves in such terms. In fact, the identity 'non-Muslim' may seem an artificially constructed category within this analysis. I have used it not only to indicate the binary nature of the discourse of Islamophobia, but also to highlight the point that as a hegemonic ideology, those who naturally belong to Western culture view themselves as the universal, the norm that does not require articulation. A term such as 'non-Muslim' thus problematizes this naturalisation of identity as the norm against which Muslims are considered aberrant. In addition it is important to remember that those who mark Muslims out as 'them' implicitly construct 'us'. It is the unarticulated nature of this 'us' that is important to bring to the fore.

But further, these categories reinforce the distinctions that Islamophobia makes between people. Islamophobia works to sustain Eurocentric dominance by making the socially constructed categories of the discourse into social realities. Claiming that you do not consider yourself a 'non-Muslim' does not mean that you do not receive social, economic, political, cultural and psychological benefits from a systemic cultural racism that distributes these benefits according to such categories.

A corollary to this argument is that in my focus on cultural categories, other identifications are ignored, dismissed or their importance diluted. Although a consideration of Eurocentrism requires an inordinate focus on such constructions, at the expense of a consideration of the intersection of other identities, in seeking to understand Islamophobic discourse, analysts must approach it on its

own terms. Islamophobia obliterates other identities in order to culturalize Muslims' religious identification as their primary and overriding identity. De-naturalising such constructions through critical analysis means attending to these arguments in order to destabilise their constructions. I have argued throughout this thesis that the culturalization of Muslim interaction with society is a strategy of control that works to distribute privileges hierarchically. This does not mean that I consider these categories to be 'real' in any sense, or that I discount the actual, varied identifications of Muslims and non-Muslims.

In advancing this theoretical position, it is not my intention to ignore class and gender dimensions. Clearly differently positioned actors receive varying benefits. For example, it is usually low economic status Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage Muslims who are targeted with the instruments of state Islamophobia. Men and women also receive different attention, with women usually considered to be damaging to internal integration and men considered a security risk. Similarly, middle class professional Muslims who participate in wealth social exclusion and self-segregation are rarely targeted through state practices which aim to integrate them in to British values. Nevertheless, while class and gender are important dimensions which condition how much Islamophobia individuals receive, the totalising nature of the discourse means that every Muslim, or individual identified as such, receives structural disadvantages in a Eurocentric system.

The same applies to non-Muslims, for whom class and racial distinctions are similarly relevant. The rank and file of the English Defence League, for example, are largely white working class men who may not feel they receive any benefit from Eurocentric privilege. Yet the psychological advantages of being constructed

as natural managers of particular local and national spaces means that they, as they constantly reiterate, have a right to be heard. They claim to be the voice of ordinary British people and they demand respect as such. In chapter five I argued that an Islamic group which employed the same tactics and discourse as the EDL would be prohibited immediately as an extremist security threat. The EDL are correct in their assertions that they do not receive the same privileges as the elite, but despite all the condemnation from politicians and the media, the group has been allowed to voice its discontent in spectacular ways precisely because of Eurocentric privilege which assumes the EDL has a right to demonstrate, a privilege which has not been extended to Muslims.

On the second point, the position that Muslims are to blame for the discrimination they receive is a central trope of Islamophobia and turns on several arguments. I have discussed these in the preceding chapters, including the idea that Islamophobia is largely caused by Muslim terrorism (chapter seven) and that excessive Muslim cultural difference makes them impossible to live alongside (chapter five). I want to attend here to the argument that Muslims are in the grip of their own cultural Islamic supremacism that leads them to demand special treatment that is unacceptable in a free society.⁴⁹⁵

According to the analysis I have outlined in this thesis, Islamic supremacism cannot exist in the same way that Eurocentric supremacism exists. This is

⁴⁹⁵ An example often cited of this is the real and perceived demand that non-Muslims show deference to the Prophet by not depicting him, a central trope in both the Danish cartoons controversy and the January 2015 attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. Home Secretary Theresa May also alluded to this in her March 2015 speech on extremism, stating: 'in a pluralistic society like ours, there are responsibilities as well as rights. You don't only get the freedom to live how you choose to live. You have to respect other people's rights to do so too.' Theresa May, "Speech: A Stronger Britain, Built on Our Values (delivered at Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, London)," *Gov.uk*, 23 March, 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-stronger-britain-built-on-our-values> [Retrieved 28 March 2015].

because the latter relies on a 500 year system of domination which has accumulated wealth for its subjects through imperialist expansion and colonialist domination, created an epistemological hegemony that reified Western knowledge as the only true, rational knowledge, and has relied on a domination/subordination binary that has not only historically subjugated a large proportion of the 'Islamic world' (including the ancestors of today's Western Muslims, the vast majority of which are the descendants of post-1945 economic immigrants of former Western colonies) but continues to do so today through the neoliberal economic restructuring of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the wars of intervention and reconstruction that followed the September 11, 2001 attacks. Muslims, in the West and in the world, simply do not have the power to articulate a discourse of supremacism that is in any way comparable to Eurocentrism. There may well be individual Muslims, as well as Muslim societies and groups, who do claim that Islam is a superior social and cultural system, but this is not reinforced by the might of a global system boasting half a millennia of accumulated economic, political, epistemological, cultural and psychological privilege. Islamic supremacism, such as it exists, is an ethnocentrism and Muslims do not have the power to discipline non-Muslims in the ways I have discussed in this thesis.

Having said that, there is no theoretical reason why Muslims (as a socially constructed group) could not over a long period of time accumulate the wealth and power that would make this ethnocentrism universal in the Eurocentric sense, and thus become 'reverse-Islamophobic' toward 'Westerners'. There is nothing implicit within Western culture that makes Eurocentrism inevitable, and any cultural group with a universalising mission could potentially accumulate

advantages that allowed its particular culture to be articulated as both universal and superior. However, given the global reach of Eurocentric domination and the entrenched privileges that it has created for its social and cultural practices, this is unlikely. Islamic supremacism, thus, represents a particularistic position, while Eurocentrism is a global system of domination.

Limitations

As with all research, issues of design and implementation potentially limit the scope and interpretation of findings I have presented here. To different degrees, the research was limited by the theoretical position adopted, the implications of using construction moments as a methodological tool and researcher limitations, but before discussing these in detail I would like to briefly reflect on the research process in order to clarify the reasons that the research was designed in this way.

I initially conceived of this project as focusing exclusively on Islamophobia in the British context. As I explored these discourses further, however, it became obvious that although Islamophobic discourse was always wielded for particular purposes, in every case studied there were larger discourses at play. Having undertaken close analysis of the discourse of the Dudley mosque controversy and the EDL it was apparent that although the tropes and narratives employed at these sites were locally or nationally focused, they incorporated larger, civilisational frames that tied local and national belonging to a European/Western context. It is for this reason that I decided to study how other European states had represented Muslims during and after key construction moments and found

that similar themes of Eurocentric belonging were entwined with national narratives. The work of critical race scholars, who conceive of white supremacy as a hegemonic form, thus became invaluable to me in my interpretation of Islamophobia as a form of resurgent Eurocentrism.

The understanding of Eurocentrism as the guiding narrative that gives shape to local and national Islamophobia, by positioning particular spaces as belonging to 'the West' and threatened by Muslims, is greatly indebted to the work of Ghassan Hage, who has interpreted these practices as nationalistic. The consistent return to Western values within the differently situated discourses indicated that a larger was being appealed to by speakers employing these frames. The recognition that this occurred in a number of European states precisely when Muslims were perceived to be more powerful than they should be, led to the conceptualisation of Islamophobia as a form of Eurocentrism, articulated when the hegemonic understanding that 'the West' is the best is no longer taken for granted.

As Charles Mills has argued, the modern world has been fundamentally shaped by European colonialism, and white supremacy as a system came into existence through European expansion and the historic domination of white Europe over non-white non-Europe.⁴⁹⁶ This understanding, that whiteness and Eurocentrism are fundamentally linked, has provided the conceptual framework for this thesis as inductive reasoning has produced research results that required explanation. In the light of the findings of the analyses across chapters I have put forward a theory of Islamophobia that attempts to reconcile the local, national and civilizational spaces to which those employing the discourse appeal.

⁴⁹⁶ Mills, "White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System: A Philosophical Perspective," 37–38.

Nevertheless, issues of research design, theoretical position and methodology always have an impact on the quality of findings, and this research may have been limited first by the theoretical position adopted, specifically the lack of attention to discourses which challenge Islamophobia, second, the use of construction moments as a methodological tool, and third, researcher limitations, chiefly that I am monolingual and therefore cannot perform true discourse analysis on non-English language texts.

On the first point, perhaps the most important limitation with regard to this research is its exclusive focus on Islamophobic discourse, and its lack of engagement with discourses which seek to challenge the constructions that emerge. Peter Kolchin has detailed this criticism with regard to CRT, arguing that a focus on image and representations makes it difficult to judge the prevalence of particular ideas, while quoting extensively from racist stereotypes tends to obscure the resistance of the opponents of such views.⁴⁹⁷ My focus in this thesis has been trying to understand the nature and purpose of Islamophobic discourse. It may thus appear that the discourses of resistance, from those who seek to challenge these narratives within these discursive communities, have been omitted from the analysis.

In certain contexts, for example within the pages of *Dudley News* and on the EDL news website, there was very little challenge to the dominant discourse, and those that did remained within the discursive regime of Islamophobia (i.e. arguing that some Muslims are good, but all are potentially bad, and using the 'we are not against all Muslims, only extremists...' semantic move). What this

⁴⁹⁷ Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (2002): 162.

suggests is that Islamophobia is a dominant discourse, and I have detailed how the discourse constrains the cognitive processes and social mind of those to whom it appeals.

Nevertheless, challenges to dominant discourses reveal a great deal about their nature and their ability to ideologically suture ruptures in their explanatory power. The experiential knowledge of those actors subjected to racialized discourses are of particular importance when adopting a CRT approach, and in the case of this thesis the viewpoints and experiences of Muslims would have added an extra dimension to the research, that would direct attention to the ways differently situated Muslims have understood and resisted their own objectification and could potentially offer strategies for challenging and confronting Islamophobic discourse. Constraints of time and space have limited my ability to further pursue the way that challenges to Islamophobia and its dominant tropes are articulated by those objectified by the discourse, however this remains an important and fruitful area for further research.

The lack of attention to Muslims' own conceptualisation of how Islamophobia affects their lives has not been a deliberate attempt to exclude their perspectives. Much important work has been done in this area and there are a number of directions that analyses which employ the methods and theoretical perspectives I have detailed here could potentially take. My focus has been on how and why non-Muslims employ Islamophobic discourse. As David Gillborn has noted, if those employing critical theoretical perspectives take seriously the importance of experiential knowledge, then the perspectives of white identified people to help

inform critical interventions must not be discounted.⁴⁹⁸ My own subjectivity as an uncomplicatedly white, and therefore Eurocentric identified researcher, has placed me in a position where, during my daily life, I am regularly subjected to many of the argumentative strategies and tropes that are central to Islamophobic discourse, spoken by fellow white identified people who believe they are speaking to someone sympathetic with their views. As David Stovall has argued:

Whites should be included in the focus on White privilege in that the responsibility in educating other Whites rests heavily with them. Their experiential knowledge of the construct enables them to unpack the intricate and subtle functions of White privilege and its various rationales.⁴⁹⁹

My own experiential knowledge of the way Islamophobic discourse has an everyday and unconscious element has, in many ways, formed the rationale for this research as well as convincing me of its importance during the inevitable moments of doubt that come with the territory of any large research project. As such, this thesis may be seen in part as an attempt to unpack those common-sense and mundane Islamophobic discourses that non-Muslim identified people are subjected to. While it is not my intention to suggest that non-Muslims are somehow 'more hurt' by Islamophobia, that would be absurd, it is important to recognise that a system of Islamophobia which spans all social sites encompasses all social actors, and that non-Muslim identified people are often seen as allies in Islamophobia. A central focus of this research has thus been to equip all actors to challenge articulations which claim to be rational and reasonable.

⁴⁹⁸ Gillborn, *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?*, 34.

⁴⁹⁹ David Stovall, "Forging Community in Race and Class: Critical Race Theory and the Quest for Social Justice in Education," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 9, no. 3 (2006): 251–252.

A second limitation may be perceived with regard to the use of construction moments to guide methodological sampling. How far can this be said to be researcher bias? Surely whenever Muslims are perceived to be newsworthy negative discourses about them will be circulating at a greater frequency? Construction moments are useful for focusing discursive attention on to those discourses that seek to represent subjects. By focusing on moments when high frequency representations occur, this methodological tool allows us to see representations emerging and understand the underlying constructions that guide them. What was perhaps most interesting and illuminating about using this tool to guide the research was the fact that rarely did new discourses emerge. Even in very specific local circumstances such as Dudley discourses of terrorism, extremism and self-segregation were employed as rational responses to a local building issue. Although the use of construction moments to focus the research on attempts to represent Muslims could be perceived as a limitation, I believe that it has strengthened the research by illustrating how dominant the narratives and tropes that make up Islamophobia really are. Focusing on construction moments in different sites nationally and in Europe illustrates how resilient these representations are to change. Possibilities for further research using this method are exciting and could only strengthen a research agenda on Islamophobic discourse. For example, a comparison of how some of the construction moments analysed have been interpreted elsewhere would give a broader picture of how these narratives are re-articulated in other contexts. Non-Western contexts would be particularly fruitful area for further comparative research, and an analysis of how the events discussed in this thesis have been represented in Muslim or non-Muslim international contexts, and how this supports or undermines the thesis

that Islamophobia is a form of resurgent Eurocentrism, would be particularly interesting.

A further word on this is necessary. During the course of this research there have been numerous construction moments, some of which I have alluded to in passing. For example, the Woolwich beheading of Lee Rigby, the Paris attacks at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* and the continuing fleeing of British citizens to fight in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Events have unfolded so rapidly that they can only be given a cursory treatment in this thesis, but as construction moments they are rich opportunities for further research to test the hypotheses presented here.

Finally there was a very clear researcher limitation with regard to the analysis of national discourses in other European countries. Being unable to speak German, Italian, Dutch, Danish or French, I could not subject the discourses that emerged from the construction moments detailed in chapter six to close discourse analysis. The narratives and tropes identified are thus reliant on secondary (and translated) sources and considered through thematic analysis. The advantage of this approach is that in taking a broad view of the way in which various European nation states employed Islamophobic representations, a comparative picture of the way Muslims are understood to threaten national and European values emerges. Nevertheless, native speakers would be able to pick up on greater nuances of representation and national themes than the analysis presented here is able to. Clear possibilities for future research thus offer themselves in the form of studies which subject these discourses to a thorough analysis which would pick out themes and representations that are obscured to non-native speakers.

Implications: the waste of Islamophobia

In their book *White Racism* Feagin, Vera and Batur highlighted the waste of racism in terms of energy, a breakdown of human empathy and sacrifice of human talent.⁵⁰⁰ It is my position that Islamophobia should be opposed as a system of domination regardless of instrumental reasons for its opposition, however the colossal wastefulness of Islamophobia is simply too great not to mention.

Islamophobia has coloured the state's understanding of where to focus its attention to such an extent that it has been immensely wasteful of both human lives and state resources. The 'war on terror', which turned on Islamophobic constructions of Muslims as terrorists to be 'rooted out', oppressed Afghan women in desperate need of rescue, and the exportation of freedom through occupation, has been estimated to have directly led to the deaths of more than 350,000 people⁵⁰¹ and cost more than \$4.4 trillion.⁵⁰² Similarly, British counterterrorism has pumped millions of pounds into counterterror programmes designed to disrupt a (highly contentious) 'conveyor belt of terror'.⁵⁰³ The

⁵⁰⁰ Feagin, Vera, and Batur, *White Racism*, 31.

⁵⁰¹ Costs of War Project, "Direct War Death in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan October 2001- April 2014," *Boston University*, 2014, [http://www.costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/Direct War Death Toll in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2001 to April 2014 6 26.pdf](http://www.costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/Direct%20War%20Death%20Toll%20in%20Iraq,%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%20since%202001%20to%20April%202014.pdf) [Retrieved 27 March 2015].

⁵⁰² Neta Crawford, "US Costs of Wars through 2014: \$4.4 Trillion and Counting," *Boston University*, 2014, [http://www.costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/articles/20/attachments/US Costs of War Summary Crawford June 2014.pdf](http://www.costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/articles/20/attachments/US%20Costs%20of%20Wars%20through%202014.pdf) [Retrieved 27 March 2015].

⁵⁰³ Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley's research into the usefulness of the conveyor belt of terror thesis, which holds that individuals move in a unidirectional way from sympathy with Islamist ideas to radicalism, has seriously problematized its assumptions. Their study suggests that non-violent Islamist groups may compete with their violent counterparts for members and thus potentially provide a bulwark against, rather than a path to, terrorism. Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, "Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction Between Activism and Radicalism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 2 (2009): 239–260.

Islamophobic dimensions of these policies have included employing domestic surveillance programmes that have focused their gaze on Muslim institutions, high density Muslim communities, and Islamic university societies and charities,⁵⁰⁴ as well as racialized policing including 'shoot to kill' policies and increased stop and search of 'Muslim looking' individuals.⁵⁰⁵

Based on Islamophobic understandings that culturalize politics and politicise culture, these practices have not only wasted lives, talent, time and resources, but there is evidence to suggest that they have also been largely counterproductive, failing to reach individuals most at risk of 'radicalisation', alienating large sections of the Muslim community and creating a widespread distrust of the state among both domestic and foreign Muslim populations.⁵⁰⁶

But it is not just Muslim lives that are affected by the wastefulness of Islamophobia. The immense amount of energy invested in distrusting and fearing Muslims by those employing Islamophobic understandings, including the anti-Dudley mosque campaigners and the English Defence League, results not only in a breakdown of communal bonds and empathy, wasteful in itself, but a proliferation of perennially blocked identities. As Zeus Leonardo has noted in

⁵⁰⁴ Ryan Erfan-Ghettani, "Strangers in Our Own Land. 23 March.," *Institute of Race Relations*, 2012, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/strangers-in-our-own-land/>; Spalek and Lambert, "Muslim Communities, Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation: A Critically Reflective Approach to Engagement"; Choudhury and Fenwick, "The Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Muslim Communities"; Ansari, "British Anti-Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-Hunt"; Fekete, "Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State," 7–10.

⁵⁰⁵ David Gillborn, "Rethinking White Supremacy," *Ethnicities* 6, no. 3 (2006): 320–323; Pantazis and Pemberton, "From the 'Old' to the 'New' Suspect Community: Examining the Impacts of Recent UK Counter-Terrorist Legislation," 654–659; Poynting and Mason, "'Tolerance, Freedom, Justice and Peace?': Britain, Australia and Anti-Muslim Racism since 11 September 2001," 375–376; Madeline-sophie Abbas, "White Terror in the 'War on Terror,'" *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies* 9, no. 1 (2013): 12–13.

⁵⁰⁶ Thomas, "Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme"; Birt, "Promoting Virulent Envy?"; Choudhury and Fenwick, "The Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Muslim Communities"; Arun Kundnani, "Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept," *Race & Class* 54, no. 2 (2012): 3–25; Christina Pantazis and Simon Pemberton, "Trading Civil Liberties for Greater Security?: The Impact on Minority Communities," *Criminal Justice Matters* 73, no. 1 (2008): 12–14.

relation to whiteness, the daily fears associated with the upkeep of this fragile construction mean that, as a performance, whiteness is always an inch away from being exposed as bogus.⁵⁰⁷ Constructed on the understanding that Muslim presence prevents a space being what it should be, contemporary Eurocentric identities are similarly built on shifting sands, and rely to a large extent on worry, anger and anxiety. The identity crises that result from conceptualising the world in this way can thus never be positively resolved and attending to the wastefulness of Islamophobia implies also the recognition that it is psychologically harmful to those employing it.

To interpret Islamophobia as a Eurocentric discourse of spatial dominance highlights its nature as a structural racism that serves to disadvantage Muslims in a number of ways, while conversely advantaging non-Muslims. To be a Muslim in the post-2001 period is to be held collectively responsible for society's gravest problems, relentlessly scrutinised for signs of extremism and anti-British or anti-Western sentiment, expected to consistently and monotonously condemn terrorism and extremism, to put the good of the nation above one's own cultural practices and to be deeply suspicious if perceived not to do so. What is being asked of Muslims in the contemporary climate is unjust and illegitimate. But more than this, it is impossible. Islamophobic discourse always implicitly or explicitly asserts that 'our' Western values are better, and they are proposed as the solution to all the problems that Muslims cause. The discourse asserts that if Muslims would practice their religion in a secular, liberal and invisible way, as 'we' practice ours, then the natural hostility of non-Muslims to their difference would dissolve. Couched in conditions that demand Muslims' first priority be respect for

⁵⁰⁷ Leonardo, "The Souls of White Folk: Critical Pedagogy, Whiteness Studies, and Globalization Discourse," 31.

and recognition of Eurocentrism's implicit supremacy, Islamophobia informs Muslims that they will never be embraced in the nation or the 'civilisation' until they shed their cultural difference, secularise their religion and become like 'us'.

The problem with deploying universal values as weapons of control is that their very reification as non-negotiable and immutable diminishes their usefulness for the purposes they are being wielded. The consistent return to values as a salve to be applied to social conflict and excessive Muslim difference reveals something important about Islamophobia. It is understood that Eurocentric values are universal values, encompassing collective human aspirations to freedom, democratic representation, equality and tolerance. They are positioned as the starting point from which we are allowed to have differences, the glue that binds us, and as such are not open to debate; we must all accept these values as the expression of our sameness before we may assert our differences. Yet the sacrosanct positioning of such values as beyond challenge means that rather than being open to the scrutiny of alternative traditions, positions and understandings, Eurocentric values are increasingly wielded in a totalitarian manner that subverts contestation and reproduces difference as danger and threat.

Positioning such values as at the same time universal and immutable implies that one-way integration is the only integration considered possible. Yet, as more Muslims are born and raised in Britain and the West, furnished with and expecting the same rights and entitlements, and interpreting their religious and cultural heritage in hybrid and novel ways, this understanding of integration is increasingly archaic. The recognition and respect demanded by Muslims, and by a progressive society in general, requires not the assimilation of Muslims who

have shed their cultural baggage, but mutual integration that recognises diverse cultural rights and accords respect to all. It is this integration, and the attendant possibility that 'we' may be changed by 'them,' that Eurocentric Islamophobia fears most. And as a discourse of control it operates to prevent such change, and reinstate the dominance and might of the non-Muslim group.

Conclusion

Recognising Islamophobia as an ideology of dominance that is wasteful of lives, talent and resources implies that, despite the scattered privileges associated with presenting oneself as a Eurocentric subject and thus laying claim to the benefits of Eurocentrism, the vast majority of people in Britain do not benefit from it. Sustained by a fear of loss, Islamophobia is an anxiety that saps the energy of those subscribing to its tenets as they try to maintain the way things are in the face of local, national and global change.

Islamophobia depends on the belief that Muslim participation in society is to be feared. If we were to remove this pillar and counter this idea, then Islamophobia would crumble. This is not an easy task. As an ideology, Islamophobia is not merely a collection of erroneous ideas that can be proved false, but a social narrative that provides its adherents with an explanation of how things are and how they should be. Within the ideology of Islamophobia, Muslims are blamed for society's problems, and the solution is considered to lie in the restoration of cultural control to non-Muslim managers whose values are considered better. While destabilising these narratives and the assertions on which they are based is important, it does little to destabilise the ideological

Eurocentric supremacy on which Islamophobia is based and to which its adherents constantly turn in seeking justification.

How then to challenge Eurocentrism? As discussed above, the hegemonic articulation of Eurocentrism in the form of Islamophobia itself suggests that all is not well. When the politics of domination expressly articulates itself as such, it indicates that the dominated are not content to remain in their place. It is the interpretation of Muslim political action as indicative of a general Islamic cultural challenge to particular spaces that leads to the articulation of Islamophobia. In order to contest this ideologically, first the tendency to culturalize politics must be dismantled across society. Not only does this perspective encourage Islamophobia, but it also has been shown to be counterproductive and wasteful of state resources.

Second, the sense of control that Islamophobia seeks to restore should be addressed. Islamophobia does not emerge from a vacuum and the need to fantasise dominance in order to feel worthy must be addressed. How can communities and individuals be empowered so they have no need to fantasise dominance in order to feel worthy?

Third, Muslim political perspectives must be heard. For too long the culturalization of politics has rendered any Muslim political expression potentially risky. Controlling the boundaries of valid expression has had real world effects on the communities targeted, causing distrust of each other, the government, police and security services, and wider society. As Arun Kundnani has discussed, it is the possibility rather than the fact of surveillance that is enough to pressure

people in to conformity and enforce a culture of self-censorship.⁵⁰⁸ The anxiety generated by state scrutiny and the policing of expression does not make for active and articulate Muslim citizens. By the same token, the fear of Muslim political activity experienced by the non-Muslim population has similarly erosive effects upon communities at all levels.

To begin to challenge this state of affairs it is incumbent upon both elites and ordinary people to provide alternative conceptualisations to the tendency to culturalize politics. Those Muslim activists who operate at the grassroots level to provide counter-narratives must be supported, both intellectually and financially, and a new narrative that asserts that politics is distinct from culture must be taken up by scholars, practitioners and ordinary people. This thesis represents a modest step in that direction, and aims to provide conceptual and analytical tools with which to challenge Islamophobic discourse and the Eurocentrism on which it relies.

But most importantly, an anti-Eurocentric policy must be prepared to relinquish control of culturally defined spaces. In a multiracial and multicultural society it is no longer feasible to assert the superiority of a Western subjectivity without those historically and contemporarily objectified by this discourse protesting its supposedly unblemished record of progress. If the West has truly exported its positive qualities to the world, changing and influencing the cultures it came into contact with, it must now be willing to be changed. In Britain, this must start by recognising Islamophobia to be an articulation of Western supremacy, and admitting Muslims to the position of equal subjects with as legitimate a claim on the future of the nation as anyone else.

⁵⁰⁸ Kundnani, *The Muslims Are Coming!*, 281.

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